COMMONWEAL

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The Editors 1945 • The Editors 1995 • J. Bryan Hehir • Bruce Loebs
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Who was Margarete Sommer ? by MICHAEL PHAYER
STEVEN ENGLUND on Tad Szulc's 'Pope John Paul II'
Reports from abroad: Raymond Schroth • Robert P. Imbelli

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CORRESPONDENCE

Perfection, please

Bronx, N.Y.

To the Editors: No wonder there's a shortage of priests. Who could meet the standards of the critics who write to *Commonweal*? [Correspondence, May 19] Having previously demanded intellectual eminence, unstinting devotion to the poor, and personal holiness, now they require silver-tongued oratory.

Perhaps because of an aversion to orators, I don't find this crop of clerics so bad. The preaching I hear in the course of a year—in the Bronx, in Northern and Southern Florida, in upstate New York, and in Vermont—varies rhetorically from inspiring to dull, the average being average. But the subject is consistently the meaning of the day's Gospel, the message consistently of tolerance, love, and forgiveness.

Strange, isn't it, that unlike their hard-nosed predecessors of fifty years ago, today's priests "don't get no respect." Of course, most of them are not as smart as their critics, who choose more respectable outlets for their intellectual and oratorical talents. RUTH M. AMES

Obstacles to preaching

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: More about preaching. Some do it daily because that is what we are asked to do. Each Mass is to have a homily and, at least in its daily incarnation, the homily is a very challenging form of communication. In a sacred context to be brief, to come to a point, to be, in some manner, concrete—it all makes for gray hair.

Then there are obstacles. For example, one is not Tom Brokaw. One may be angry about the pope, some of the bishops, feminist theology, political agitation, masculine assumptions, remembered slights, reproductive tensions, etc.

Let us be realistic about church experiences. We are good at some of them, not so good at others—just as with family meals: sometimes the tuna tastes better than the steak. To be sure, let us be intelligent. But what we are looking for, it seems to me, is the courage to reveal ourselves to one another as persons of faith and love.

The heartlessness of unrealistic standards is not a pleasing expression of our Catholicism. Wood carvers create beauty out of imperfect trees. If God wanted us without imperfection, he would have done more with stainless steel. Peter might not have made it to Rome.

(MSGR.) TIMOTHY S. COLLINS

Measuring justice

Pagosa Springs, Colo.

To the Editors: Paul Baumann's justification of the death penalty [May 19] is the least emotional, most rational effort I have encountered—yet I am not persuaded. Neither, however, am I persuaded that the death penalty is absolutely prohibited by natural law. What I would insist is that even if one concedes Baumann's assertion—"Those justly convicted for the mass killing in Oklahoma City *deserve* the death penalty" [emphasis added]—one does not have to call for actually imposing it.

Although I would not deny that murderers deserve the death penalty, neither am I prepared to assert that they do; not because I would downplay the heinousness of the crime but because I do not well comprehend what Baumann calls the "calculus" of retributive justice.

Every effort to rationalize the sentencing system seems to lead to irrationality. We simply do not know how to contrive a punishment that surely fits a crime; objectively identical punishments for a given crime might be widely disparate subjectively for different perpetrators. I begin to suspect that there is an intractable practical difficulty with the eminently admirable abstract concept of a condign punishment.

"Life piled on life were all too little," perhaps, for working out the implications of my puzzlement, "and of one to me little remains." But if I get it worked out, I'll let you know. JOHN SPRADLEY

'Cybercampus' can work

Phoenix, Ariz.

To the Editors: Abigail McCarthy's column entitled "Cybercampus" [April 7] contains errors about the University of Phoenix and its *Online* computer-mediated instructional system.

The courses and programs available through UOP *Online* are not "adjuncts to regular courses"; they are the same courses comprising the same degree programs that UOP provides in its "on-the-ground" classrooms, except that they have been configured for delivery through text-based communications on personal computers. Students using *Online*, like all other UOP students, are required to take courses, do research, conduct inquiries, read texts, write papers, engage in discussions, and take tests.

Ms. McCarthy implies that because *Online* students and faculty are not in physical proximity to one another there is no interaction among them, and that student achievement and the quality of education are substandard. In fact, there are more one-on-one faculty-student and stu-

(Continued on page 28)

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Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome but must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Hiroshima 1945

This editorial is reprinted from the Commonweal *issue of August 24, 1945.*

Two months ago (June 22) we were writing about poison gas. We said: "To the Orient we are bringing the latest inventions of our civilization. There is only one we have not brought. It is gas. If we use that we will have brought them all. Gas is no worse than flame. It is only that it is one more weapon. The last one we have to use. Until we invent a new one." And then we said: "The time has come when nothing more can be added to the horror if we wish to keep our coming victory something we can use—or that humanity can use."

Well, it seems that we were ridiculous writing that sort of thing. We will not have to write that sort of thing any more. Certainly, like everyone else, we will have to write a great deal about the future of humanity and the atomic bomb. But we will not have to worry any more about keeping our victory clean. It is defiled.

There were names of places in Europe which from the early days of the war were associated with a German idea that by disregarding the rights of civilians you could shorten a war. These names of places—Rotterdam, Coventry—were associated, and seemed likely to be associated in men's minds for a great number of years, with a judgment of German guilt and German shame. There was a port in the Pacific which sheltered American naval power. It was attacked by air without warning and the name Pearl Harbor was associated, and seemed likely to be associated for many years, with a Japanese idea that you could win a war by attacking the enemy before declaring war on the enemy. The name Pearl Harbor was a name for Japanese guilt and shame.

The name Hiroshima, the name Nagasaki are names for American guilt and shame.

The war against Japan was nearly won. Our fleet and Britain's fleet stood off Japan's coast and shelled Japan's cities. There was no opposition. Our planes, the greatest bombers in the world, flew from hard won, gallantly won bases and bombed Japanese shipping, Japanese industry and, already, Japanese women and children. Each day they announced to the Japanese where the blows would fall, and the Japanese were unable to prevent anything they chose to do.

Then, without warning, an American plane dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

Russia entered the war. There was no doubt before or after Russia entered the war that the war against Japan was won. An American plane dropped the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki.

We had to invent the bomb because the Germans were going to invent the bomb. It was a matter of avoiding our own possible destruction. We had to test the bomb and we tested it in a desert. If we were to threaten the use of it against the Japanese, we could have told them to pick a desert and then go look at the hole. Without warning we dropped it into the middle of a city and then without

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warning we dropped it into the middle of another city.

And then we said that this bomb could mean the end of civilization if we ever got into a war and everyone started to use it. So that we must keep it a secret. We must keep it as sole property of people who know how to use it. We must keep it the property of peace-loving nations. That is what we said about the atomic bomb—together with odds and ends about motors the size of pin points which would drive a ship three times round the world—that is what we said about it, after we had used it ourselves. To secure peace, of course. To save lives, of course. After we had brought indescribable death to a few hundred thousand men, women, and children, we said that this bomb must remain always in the hands of peace-loving peoples.

For our war, for our purposes, to save American lives we have reached the point where we say that anything goes. That is what the Germans said at the beginning of the war. Once we have won our war we say that there must be international law. Undoubtedly.

When it is created, Germans, Japanese, and Americans will remember with horror the days of their shame.

In keeping with *Commonweal*'s usual summer schedule only one issue is published each month during July and August. The next issue will be dated September 8.

HIROSHIMA 1995

In August 1945 the end of war with Japan ushered in an era of peaceful American-Japanese relations that has lasted for fifty years. An outcome so positive and enduring could hardly have been imagined after the fierce combat that brought the war to Japanese territory in the spring and summer of 1945, nor, indeed, after our use of the atomic bomb. At Iwo Jima and Okinawa Americans faced a Japanese force committed to victory or suicide (*see* Nancy Westerfield's account on page 30); the U.S. Air Force fire bombed Tokyo in March and then other Japanese cities, killing hundreds of thousands of civilians; finally two atomic bombs were dropped: August 6 on Hiroshima and August 9 on Nagasaki.

Despite military defeats on the Asian mainland, dire shortages of food and oil, a total naval blockade, and the loss of hundreds of thousands of soldiers, the Japanese military were resolute: victory or national suicide. This *kamikaze* spirit—fighting to the death at Iwo Jima and Okinawa—lent credence to warnings by U. S. military leaders that an invasion, scheduled for November 1, 1945, would be hard fought; the lowest estimates at the time were for 95,000 casualties in the first months alone, one-third of them deaths. The scenario of Japanese fanaticism and the militarization of the whole population, the potential American casualties, and war weariness have been used to justify the use of atomic weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki: They would save lives—American ones certainly, but Japanese as well. Bruce Loebs, in his account of the final days of the war (page 10), argues that it was the destruction of Hiroshima that finally brought Emperor Hirohito to confront the Japanese military and order the surrender of Japan.

The war with Japan ended—and the effort to write the history and debate the morality of the atomic bomb began. Loebs's moral analysis is not our own, but his history, we believe, is accurate in describing the last days of the war with Japan (*see* also, J. Bryan Hehir, page 9).

Of course, matters moral and historical are never simple—as the *Commonweal* editorial of August 24, 1945 (reprinted above), makes clear. The war against Japan was ended by immoral means—civilians were directly targeted. But the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not, as the editorial notes, the first occasion when the Allies bombed cities and targeted civilians, nor were they the last. German and Japanese cities had been fire bombed, and the slaughter of civilians continued even as the Japanese agreed to surrender.

Many who focus solely on our use of atom bombs and who say that Japan would have surrendered without it overlook the immoral nature of fire bombing. A-bombs or fire bombs—the ends still do not justify the means. The *Commonweal* editorial was right: even before the advent of the A-bomb, the Allies had tragically adopted the practices of the enemy. Their "shame" was also our own.

Fifty years later, when the Smithsonian Institution set out to create an exhibit that would remember the end of the war, it tried to raise these difficult questions. That effort was brought down by veterans' groups, the Air Force Association, and elements of the U.S. Congress. The passage of time has not changed the gruesome and awful facts of what the Japanese did in beginning and conducting the war and what Americans did to end it. Neither has the passage of time convinced most American soldiers and sailors slated to be part of the invasion forces that

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the atomic bombs and the fire bombing were not justified (*see* Brian Doyle, page 14). The moral restraints of the just-war tradition embodied in international law and violated by both incendiary devices and atomic bombs were not compelling for those destined to die in the war nor for the political leaders who controlled their fate. The collapse of the Smithsonian exhibit shows that even today we are, as a nation, loath to raise these necessary questions.

Still, this anniversary has been the occasion for further reflection, moral and political. Three writers, Thomas Powers (*Atlantic Monthly*, July 1995), Jean Bethke Elshtain, and Michael Walzer (both in *Dissent*, Summer 1995), who, like *Commonweal*, count themselves among the critics of the decision to drop the bomb, press various issues and we urge a full reading of their reflections. Though their analyses diverge, each points to the last fifty years and reminds us of one paramount fact and diabolical irony: After Nagasaki atomic weapons have never been used again.

Fifty years later, the cold war has ended, the United States and Russia are gradually dismantling a huge and varied stockpile of nuclear arms, and this past May, 179 nations signed the nuclear nonproliferation treaty. That is small comfort in a time when conventional weapons are ever more savage and arms control rests on precarious international efforts. And yes, it is true: Though we can dismantle and bury pieces of atomic weaponry, we cannot bury the knowledge of such weapons. That is why Germans, Japanese, Russians, Americans, and British must "remember with horror the days of their shame." Perhaps that shame, too often unacknowledged and unexpressed, as much as the deterrent value of all our weapons has stayed the hand that would use such weapons again.

NOTEBOOK

IN THE BOMB WE TRUST

REFLECTIONS

It wasn't exactly love at first sight, but over the past fifty years, the bomb has become an accepted part of our lives, our most significant Significant Other of sorts, the one we've come to depend on as our last resort in foreign affairs and military policy. With it, the buck stops. General Dwight Eisenhower said of Hiroshima: "It wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing." But by the time he left the White House he observed: "It would be impossible for the United States to maintain the military commitments which it now sustains around the world...did we not possess atomic weapons and the will to use them when necessary." Today, a single Trident submarine has the capacity of 4,000 Hiroshimas. We try not to think about it.

● Thomas Merton wrote in *Commonweal* ("Nuclear War and Christian Responsibility," February 9, 1962), that it is pure madness for Christians to think we can defend ourselves with nuclear weapons: "The mere fact that we now seem to accept nuclear war as reasonable is a universal scandal," he said. Nor can we justify our moral passivity, "playing with nuclear fire and shrugging off the results as 'history,'" because "we are the ones responsible." As for using just-war criteria to justify preparations for nuclear war, he noted: "Moralists tend to discuss the problems of atomic war as if men still fought with bows and arrows." Yet it is clear—if not to moralists, then to military planners—that "atomic war is purely and simply massive and indiscriminate destruction of targets chosen not for their military significance alone, but for their importance in a calculated project of terror and annihilation."

● But are we really *that* attached to the bomb? With the demise of the Soviet Union, hasn't there been a stepping back from the nuclear brink? It's true that the United States has cut its arsenal, unilaterally refrained from nuclear testing, and renewed the nonproliferation treaty. Yet we maintain a "first-use" policy, have yet to sign a comprehensive test ban treaty, and are only now beginning to admit that our nuclear build-up exposed thousands of our citizens to radiation (sometimes on purpose) without their knowledge or consent.

● Fifty years ago, J. Robert Oppenheimer designated the first atomic bomb test "Trinity." He had been reading John Donne's sonnet, "Batter my heart, three-personed God," but misappropriated Donne's image. Donne was not invoking God's wrath but God's love: "...bend Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new," he wrote. Our hearts and wills need to be overwhelmed by such love.

● A place to start might be to hear the voices of the victims of the original bomb. Rachelle Linner has collected some in *City of Silence: Listening to Hiroshima* (Orbis). They can be searing, yet they are not without hope, a hope best summed up in the inscription on the memorial Cenotaph in Hiroshima: "We Shall Not Repeat the Evil." That is a promise worth contemplating.

PATRICK JORDAN

REPORT FROM ABROAD—I

HANOI'S VICTORY UNDONE?

VIETNAM EMBRACES THE MARKET

Ho Chi Minh's corpse glows under the yellow light. A twenty-second glimpse and we are out of the air-conditioned tomb and back in Hanoi's sweltering heat.

On this twentieth anniversary of the Vietnam War's end, and two weeks before President Bill Clinton is to "recognize" Hanoi, this son of a World War I hero and journalist has had a compulsion to see the land that had defeated both France and the United States of America.

Hanoi, in its tree-lined boulevards and Old-City streets,

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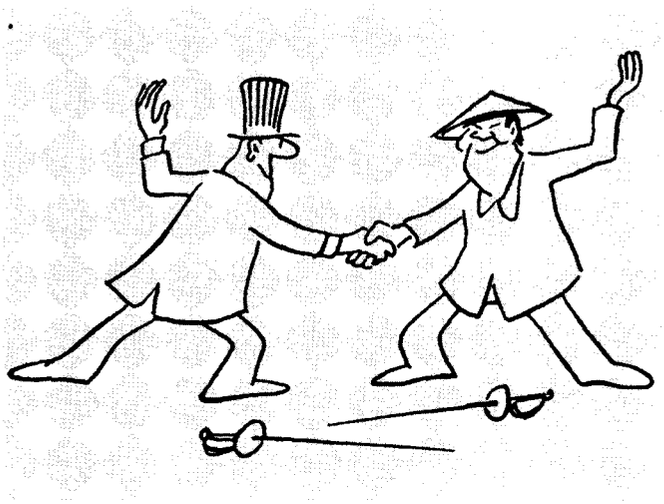

which roar and belch with the zoom and fumes of half a million motorbikes, evokes the perpetual marketplace where everybody does everything out on the street: people squat on tiny plastic stools to eat rice cooked on sidewalk stoves, toil sweating and shirtless to build new homes and hotels, repair their bikes, give haircuts and shaves, play checkers, sip sodas, smoke, talk, or, in the evening, snatch imaginary solitude on a doorstep, shutting out the din of city life to read a novel.

Vietnam is poised on the threshold of radical change. Its identity has been in the land, in rice paddies where peasants and water buffalo seem to work as equals; today, in the context of Southeast Asia's economic boom, Communist Vietnam has decided to fight its way out of poverty by imitating the "success" of Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia, by opening itself up to foreign investment.

Ironically, having proven the village liberation fighter superior to the weapons capitalist imperialism threw against him, Hanoi now turns to capitalism to save the revolution. And with it come the other scourges that have made first-world urban areas unlivable: gridlock; a 10-percent annual increase in traffic accidents; a drastic increase in tobacco consumption (at a Hanoi cathedral funeral, the pallbearers dangle cigarettes from their lips as they haul the coffin up the steps); rising drug addiction, prostitution, and AIDS; destruction of the environment—the 1980 Central Highlands elephant herd of 2,000 is now reduced to 300.

I wander around Hoan Kiem Lake, Hanoi's heart. Here, it is said, a turtle in the fifteenth century loaned the emperor Le Loi a sword to free Vietnam from the Chinese. Now, though very old, the turtle still appears from time to time. The Opera House, a replica of the Paris Opera, has closed for renovations, but, like the turtle, will reemerge in a year in fresh splendor. Within the yellow walls of what was once the "Hanoi Hilton" prison, bulldozers and derricks dig and drill. A foreign investor is turning it into a shopping mall.

When I arrive in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), the noise and congestion of Hanoi—the roaring motorbikes and chung-chung-chung of construction—are doubled. The new gleaming white hotels and office buildings and towering Xerox, Honda, and Sony billboards anticipate the coming war for the nation's economic soul.

At the War Crimes Exhibition (in pretourism days, the Museum of American War Crimes), I am struck most by the animation of the enthusiastic young guides who usher their groups from one horrible exhibition to the next: a French guillotine, last used in 1960, stands in the yard surrounded by defunct American tanks, howitzers, and planes. In photographs, American troops pose proudly with the corpses of Vietnamese they have beheaded; a GI holds up the shredded head, shoulders, and left arm of a Vietcong whose body has been blown to bits by a grenade launcher. A hall is set aside to document the fate of "counter-revolutionary" movements, some allegedly church-sponsored, since 1975. Their participants have been executed or jailed—a lesson to us all.

Though popular with tourists, the exhibition's main function, like Ho Chi Minh's tomb, is to help form the unified nation's postwar identity. At my hotel I read *The War for the Liberation of Vietnam* (1977), a 479-page history of the war compiled by Vietnamese photojournalists. It portrays American troops as weighed down with technology, bewildered by their task, and hypocritical: the same soldier shown in the museum displaying the shredded corpse is seen in this book twice—dangling the piece of dead man and lighting a cigarette for a wounded prisoner. The liberation soldier, on the other hand, lives off the land—or dies for the land, "fresh blood oozing out of the young boy killed by an American soldier and penetrating into the homeland." I carry two novels, Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* (1990) and Bao Ninh's *The Sorrow of War* (1991); the sorrow of the war on both sides is that those who fought it, haunted by visions of rotted corpses and ruined loves, will never put it behind them.

I stay in the Caravelle Hotel for the journalism lore. Here in the ninth-floor bar, mortars thumping in the background, Eric Sevareid advised Dan Rather to take a sabbatical and read the Great Books; here CBS correspondent Peter Kalisher took Walter Cronkite aside in 1968 after the Tet offensive and convinced him the American policy was wrong. From the top floor you can look down Dong Khoi (Uprising) Street at the twin spires of Notre Dame Cathedral, where, under a statue of the Blessed Virgin perched on a neon-light crescent moon, the body of Paul Nguyen Van Binh, the eighty-four-year-old archbishop of Saigon, lies for five days of Masses and public mourning before his July 5 funeral.

Between the cathedral and the Saigon River, below the hotel, the streets swarm with beggars, hucksters, hookers, pickpockets, cyclo drivers—palms outstretched, demanding that you give, buy, pay up. A leper woman cowers at the cathedral door. A twisted dwarf drags himself along the sidewalk. At a newsstand, I pay $8 for two newspapers and a magazine, and turn to face a miserable creature who has no arms and one wooden leg. As I cross the square in front of the Municipal Theater at 11 P.M., a hooker in a long white dress on a white motor scooter swoops in on me and circles around. On the terrace of the Rex Hotel, two Malaysian businessmen, who have come to set up a motorbike factory in Saigon, employing 1,200 workers and pro-

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ducing 50,000 bikes a year, tell me that in Malaysian cities there are no beggars, everyone has a job.

In the terrible heat of the cathedral, the Catholic people by the thousands, in their white shirts and dark pants, fan themselves around the archbishop's coffin.

Father Phan Khac Tu, secretary general of the Catholic Committee for Solidarity, which, against the wishes of the Holy See, "cooperates" with the Communist party, is one of three priests elected to the National Assembly. He tells me that Archbishop Binh and most Vietnamese Catholics have realized that the best way to improve the people's standard of living is to support the government, even though the church and the government have been at odds. In recent months the bishops have complained about restrictions on seminaries and Hanoi's blocking the Holy See's attempts to appoint Binh's successor. The church, it seems, has had to spend twenty years reestablishing its credibility as a Vietnamese, rather than a colonial, institution. Binh had appointed young bishops in Dalat and My Tho, who so far have not become politically involved, and who therefore may be acceptable to both Hanoi and Rome. Meanwhile, though Catholic freedom in Vietnam is restricted, the churches are filled, even for daily Mass. Yet, I sense that Father Tu and I are in different worlds when he defends government control of the press: if freedom of the press were allowed, he argues, the rich would control the media and the voice of the poor would not be heard.

On my last day I board a little motor boat and chug for an hour along the Saigon River, in and out among the junks and rowboats and freighters from all over the world. Here is Vietnam's future—and its present and past. Thousands of the poor have built their homes, like the shanty towns of Lima and Soweto, on the river's edge. Here they eke out their lives on the water as if this were a Hanoi street. In one shack a woman dumps her garbage off the porch into the river; at the next a boy urinates into the same stream; at the next a man bathes in the same water. Above them all, the billboards proclaim Xerox, Honda, Sony. The armies the peasants beat are coming back, though the uniforms and weapons may have changed.

RAYMOND A. SCHROTH

Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., author of The American Journey of Eric Sevareid *(Steerforth Press), is a journalism professor at Loyola University in New Orleans.*

READER SURVEY

Within the next few weeks, a sampling of *Commonweal* subscribers will be receiving a four-page questionnaire. The reader survey is an update of an earlier one that proved to be quite useful. It offers readers the opportunity to express their current likes and dislikes about the magazine and to make recommendations about future changes. The response rate of those surveyed has a major bearing on the validity of the results. Thus, we ask those receiving questionnaires to complete and return them promptly.

Thank you.

REPORT FROM ABROAD—II

PRAGUE SPRING

CZECHS ENCOUNTER PLURALISM

Prague last spring resounded with the sounds of music and the tramp of tourists' feet. Hundreds of concerts, large and small; thousands of tourists, large and small. The fiftieth anniversary of the close of World War II in Europe coincided with the Fiftieth Prague Spring Music Festival. And though the range of offerings extended from Byrd's polyphony to Cage's aleatory, pride of place, in this city of baroque churches and palaces, went to Vivaldi and Bach and Handel. Among the groups holding forth in churches and salons for a one-hour concert (of which one might choose several of an evening, like a multi-course dinner), you could almost spy an occasional powdered wig among the violins.

A palpable sense of liberation, prematurely released in the short-lived Spring of '68, finally prevailed in the "Velvet Revolution" of '89, and continues to animate Wenceslas Square. And though sad-faced Alexander Dubcek is gone, Václav Havel's ironic wisdom remains, giving voice to the moral aspirations that sustained so many through the forty bleak winters of communism. But, along with the tourists, Western capitalism and consumerism have taken hold with a vengeance; and, as ever, the united front that achieved the "freedom from" totalitarian constraint has now fragmented into competing understandings of the "freedom for" and what it entails.

The Catholic church is not exempt from the booming, buzzing confusions. Claims for restitution of church properties, however well-founded in theory, in practice collide with a revived Czech anticlericalism and compromise the moral capital the church had gained through its support of the anti-Communist opposition. Repair of long-neglected physical structures, by no means a useless endeavor, nonetheless deflects energy from the challenge of developing spiritual strategies for a postmodern age.

The American visitor with little knowledge of the Czech language is yet struck by the familiarity of the issues confronting Czech Catholicism. They resemble those discussed in the pages of *Commonweal* or in many a pastoral planning session in America. How to promote a Vatican II-inspired "active participation" of the laity? How to bridge the divide separating the world of Sunday worship from the everyday concerns and demands of life in society? How to wed committed discipleship and responsible citizenship?

The most astute church leaders with whom I spoke are searching for the elusive middle course between retreat into a relatively safe enclave of sectarian Catholicism and the cultural accommodation that surrenders distinctive identity and prophetic witness. No simple formula can guarantee the achievement

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of such a *via media*; it requires the capacity and courage to sustain the soul-stretching tension of ongoing dialogue and discernment. Living in truth (the title of one of Havel's books) is not the enterprise of a day; nor are its conditions settled once and for all.

Two "ecclesial-political" acts illustrate this point. On both occasions the central actor was the Slavic pope, John Paul II, and the deeply involved and participating audience was the Czech church and society. In the first, John Paul canonized Agnes of Bohemia, a thirteenth-century princess and religious reformer. Thousands of Czechs and Slovaks attended the canonization in Rome on November 12, 1989: an event full of drama and meaning for the whole society. Within a week the Velvet Revolution had begun in Prague. Providential intervention? Prophetic annunciation? Pure coincidence? When the pope subsequently visited Prague in April 1990, President Havel wondered aloud about "miracles" and their contemporary occurrence.

A second canonization took place during the pope's most recent visit to the Czech Republic in May 1995. This time, however, the canonization of the priest, Jan Sarkander, imprisoned and tortured during the religious wars of the seventeenth century, evoked strong protests from Czech Protestants who saw Sarkander as anti-Protestant and a partisan of the Austrian Habsburgs in their domination of the Czech lands. Whatever the merits of the rival claims and despite the pope's appeal for mutual forgiveness, the proceedings clearly did not further ecumenical understanding and religious concord.

Two acts of ecclesial and political significance, in different contexts, communicating different messages. Part of the church's evangelizing responsibility in the postmodern world includes renewed sensitivity to the reception of its message and the ample patience and delicate discrimination this demands. One ought not construe such a requirement as a brief for moral paralysis in the face of secular culture's plurality and ambiguity. But it does suggest that the authentic vision (and sometimes inflated rhetoric) of the Vatican's great "C-word," *Communio*, can only be actualized and made credible by the more mundane practice of the small "c-words," consultation, communication, and collaboration. And this holds whether establishing pastoral priorities, selecting bishops, or even canonizing saints.

On Pentecost Sunday, I joined in a lovely liturgy at the ancient Strahov Monastery located above the Prague Castle complex. The monastery, closed by the Communists, has once again become a center of spiritual life. Hearing the familiar Pentecostal readings, through the unfamiliar Czech tongue, brought sharper awareness of the Spirit's mission of inspiring the manifold gifts of nature and grace to serve the one communion of humanity redeemed: *e pluribus....una persona mystica.*

Earlier in the week I had visited the historic Jewish quarter of Prague, the Josefov, from which thousands of Jews had been deported by the Nazis and destined for extermination. Against this somber background, the reference in the First Eucharistic Prayer, recited on Pentecost, to "Abraham, our father in faith," took on stunning resonance. One could not help but wonder whether such an invocation, in the vernacular, during the 1930s might have served as symbolic focus of opposition to the anti-Jewish assaults of the Nazis.

The afternoon of Pentecost Sunday in Prague was spent with a Czech priest, secretly ordained during the Communist era. Over robust Czech beer, he recounted that his initial difficulties with the regime dated from his doctoral defense when he dared thank a number of his professors who had been removed from their posts by the authorities. The then guardians of the Castle deemed gratitude a subversive activity.

Gratitude, thanksgiving, Eucharist: the heart of Christian experience whether in premodern, modern, or postmodern times. The exhortation of the eucharistic prayer, "always and everywhere to give thanks," is one for all seasons. It abolishes facile divisions between worship and witness, mystical and political. It does not merely conjure up the subversive memory of Abraham and Jesus the Christ. It conspires in the extravagant Pentecostal hope of the Spirit. ROBERT P. IMBELLI

Robert P. Imbelli, a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, teaches systematic theology at Boston College.

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J. Bryan Hehir

THE LESSONS OF WORLD WAR II

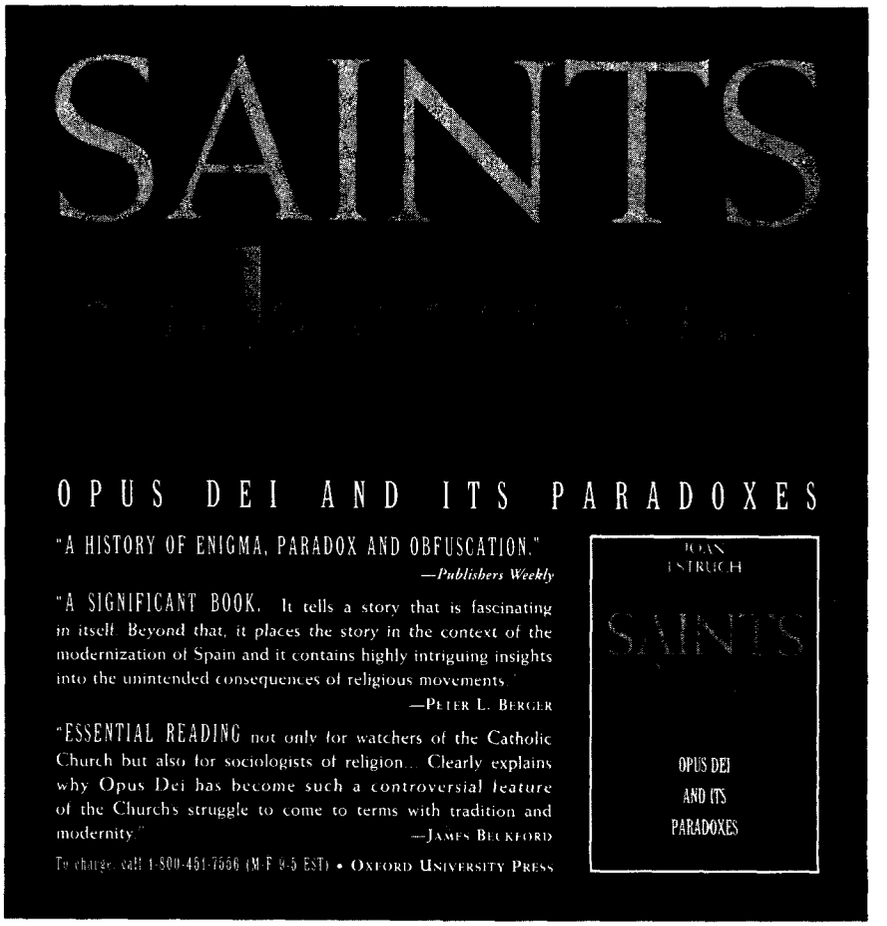
WAR MUST BE LIMITED

Writing about the anniversary of Hiroshima is never easy; doing it while witnessing the savagery of Bosnia is excruciating but illuminating. Hiroshima and Bosnia frame what Ralph B. Potter once called the moral logic of war. The atomic bombing of Hiroshima was war without limits; it exemplified Raymond Aron's description of this century as the century of total war. For Hiroshima was unique in the kind of weapon used, but not in the strategy of war it served. Hiroshima had a history which extended from Dresden through the fire bomb raids on Tokyo. Charles Krauthammer was not wrong when he wrote recently in the *Washington Post*: "The A-bomb was nothing more than strategic bombing made easy. The difference between the A-bomb and conventional strategic bombing was technical not moral; a difference not in wrongness but in ease of use."

The instinctive moral reaction to war without limits is often to seek an absolute prohibition of war as a means of policy. Here the awful experience of Bosnia enters: if no one will use force as an instrument of justice, then those who are willing to use it as an instrument of oppression can do so with impunity. The destiny of the defenseless is in the hands of their oppressors: they can be shelled without restraint, shot at a commander's whim, and raped at will. The instinctive reaction to war limits must be corrected; the moral logic of war requires preserving the use of deadly force as an instrument of order and justice, while limiting its purposes and methods. Invoking Bosnia (or Rwanda) does not justify Dresden or Hiroshima, it simply frames the precise moral challenge of war: because Bosnia can happen, war must be available as an instrument of policy, but not the policy which governed the endgame strategy of 1945. Legitimate war is limited war.

That proposition is challenged by Bruce Loebs's utilitarian defense of the bombing of Hiroshima elsewhere in this issue (page 11). He invokes a two-tiered consequentialist defense of the Allied strategy. The atomic bomb caused the Japanese surrender, and the loss of civilian life is justified by the aggregate lives (civilian and combatant; American and Japanese) saved.

Such a utilitarian defense of Hiroshima is not original, but it is persistent in the debate about the morality of President Harry Truman's decision. Its persistence is rooted in two qualities. First, it has a kind of common-sense character: Japan had lost the war, but its military was prepared to resist with suicidal ferocity; the Americans were determined to occupy Japan; hence, the bomb did everyone a favor: in affairs of this magnitude, aggregate numbers of lives—rough justice—is the most one can hope for. Second, the decision to use the atomic bomb on civilians appears inevitable: given Dresden and Tokyo, why not Hiroshima; because we had a weapon which could produce the ultimate psychological shock—and avoid a land invasion—could any president not use it? In his magisterial history of the nuclear age, *Danger and Survival* (Random House, 1988), McGeorge Bundy's detailed and agonized analysis of Hiroshima conveys the context of decision: "Against Japan as against Nazi Germany, the na-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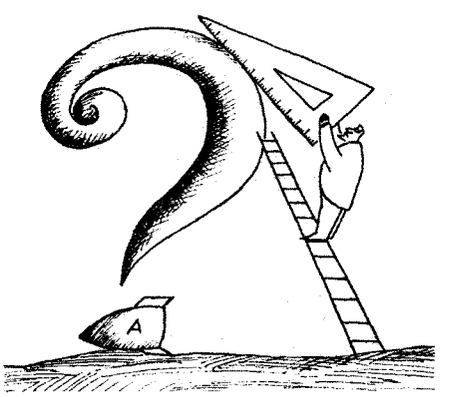
tional mood was implacable: Sink ships, bomb cities, kill Japs—this was the mood of the commanders, the mood of the men and women in the street, and the mood of the Congress." Rough justice and a relentless, impatient public frame the consequentialist case for Hiroshima.

Was there another position available? One which could stand against inevitability and cost/benefit calculus? To many careful analysts, it seemed there was not. Bundy's care in reviewing the data and weighing it is relentlessly impressive. When he takes up Michael Walzer's critique of the Hiroshima decision, Bundy observes: "his argument deserves respectful attention, although—or perhaps because—*no one* put it forward before Hiroshima." A similar comment is made by Thomas Powers in the July issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*: "Americans are still painfully divided over the right words to describe the brutal campaign of terror that ended the war, but it is instructive that those who criticize the atomic bombings most severely have never gone on to condemn *all* the bombing. In effect, they give themselves permission to condemn one crime (Hiroshima) while enjoying the benefits of another (the conventional bombing that ended the war)."

In response to these assessments of Hiroshima stands an article which Charles Curran has called the only "classic" in American Catholic moral thought, the Jesuit John C. Ford's 1944 essay in *Theological Studies* on "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing." Its status as a classic grows from the attention given it since 1944, not to its immediate impact. Bundy depicts convincingly the inner circle of decision making in 1945; the principle of noncombatant immunity (the heart of Ford's essay) had been violated so often on all sides that it no longer held any influence among political or military leaders. Bundy again: "No one ever said simply, do not use it on a city *at all*."

But John Ford did say it long before Hiroshima with a logic and passion that guarantee he would have said it about Hiroshima. His article applies as specifically to atomic bombing as it did to obliteration bombing with conventional weapons. It is written with a tone of moral certainty which matches the tone of Loebs's article, but with a diametrically opposed conclusion. Ford's long, detailed argument, made in moral and empirical terms, had two objectives: to demonstrate that the classical distinction between combatants and civilians could not be wished away by modern strategists or their apologists, and to assert that British and American bombing policy by 1944 had clearly violated the principle of civilian immunity from direct attack. The tone of the article moves from cold logic (precise definitions, multiple distinctions) to a passionate defense of the status of "innocent civilians." Before he began a listing of occupations (twenty-five lines) which in his view *must* be protected from direct attack, Ford challenged the prevailing character of opinion: "Read the list. If you can believe that these classes of persons deserve to be described as combatants, or deserve to be treated as legitimate objects of violent repression, then I shall not argue further. If, when their governments declare war, these persons are so guilty that they deserve death, then let us forget the law of Christian charity, the natural law, and go back to barbarism, admitting that total war has won out and we must submit to it." A year before Hiroshima, Ford stood ready to condemn its logic.

It is not sufficient to recall his argument, however prophetic it was. It is necessary once again to make the case that the noncombatant immunity principle is nonnegotiable. Two reasons, drawn from different styles of moral reasoning, can be used. First, observance of noncombatant immunity is directly and intrinsically related to the basic justification of any use of force. If killing can *ever* be justified, it is *only* if those killed *must* be restrained in this way from doing grave harm to others by what they do each day. Hence, if civilians are purposefully targeted and/or intentionally killed, the strategy which does so has lost its essential connection to that one reason which justifies it. Morally such a strategy entails murder, not justified killing. Second, even from a consequentialist perspective, the barrier against killing civilians should be "virtually exceptionless" because of the nature of war. In this realm of human activity, both the psychology and the politics of war ("national security," "supreme emergency") produce a dynamic that seeks to eliminate restraint in the name of noble objectives. To lose the absolute barrier against force which civilian immunity represents is to lose morality's hold on conscience and policy in wartime.



Because this principle is so crucial, the way in which Ford's position is received today is encouraging. The public record indicates much greater support for his position in the 1990s than was the case in the 1940s or the 1950s (Korea). The debate on nuclear policy in the 1980s, the Gulf War debate in the 1990s, and even the (discouraging) discussion of what to do in Bosnia has attended to the civilian/combatant distinction in a way that vindicates Ford's argument.

This column is written on the day when the United States, Britain, and France have threatened "substantial air strikes" against Bosnia Serbs. The Serbian architects of the assault on the Muslim enclaves deserve to be struck with substantial force. The announcement of the policy included discussion of the risk to civilians; undoubtedly such a policy will endanger civilians even as it is designed to protect them from Serbian brutality. The difference from Dresden, Tokyo, and Hiroshima, however, is not only an essential difference of magnitude. It is the logic of the policy; civilians may be hit but they are not to be targeted. On that distinction hangs the moral logic of war. World War II violated the logic in pursuit of a great good; it is less important to focus on why moral restraint failed then, than it is to observe its rigorous imperative in our own strategy and policy today. The purpose in being clear about the past is to provide a guide for the future. War *may* be necessary; if so, it *must* be limited. □

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HIROSHIMA & NAGASAKI

ONE NECESSARY EVIL, ONE TRAGIC MISTAKE

BRUCE LOEBS

Winston Churchill and Harry Truman found biblical metaphors to describe their first reaction to the atomic bomb. Churchill asked rhetorically, "What was gunpowder? Trivial. What was electricity? Meaningless. This atomic bomb is the Second Coming in Wrath!" Truman reflected in his daily journal, "We have discovered the most terrible bomb in the history of the world. It may be the fire destruction prophesied in the Euphrates Valley era, after Noah and his fabulous ark."

America's use of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki fifty years ago unleashed a debate that has not subsided. Historian Charles Mee damned the use of the atomic bomb as "wanton murder" and Hanson Baldwin, former military editor of the *New York Times*, lamented, "we are now branded with the mark of the beast." In its August 24, 1945, issue [*see* page 3], *Commonweal* declared: "The name Hiroshima, the name Nagasaki are names for American guilt and shame." Despite such condemnations, a Gallup poll on August 15 showed that 85 percent of the American people approved "using the new atomic bomb on Japanese cities."

Today, as then, President Truman's defenders agree with Secretary of War Henry Stimson that "this deliberately premeditated destruction was our least abhorrent choice. The destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki put an end to the Japanese war. It stopped the fire raids and the strangling blockade; it ended the ghastly specter of a clash of great land armies."

The debate continues in 1995, not only in the academic journals and the mass media but in high-level diplomatic exhanges. President Bill Clinton refused a request from Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama to apologize for dropping the bomb, but his administration, responding to complaints from Japan, directed the Postal Service to cancel a commemorative mushroom-cloud postage stamp. The official language of anniversary ceremonies will drop the traditional "V-J Day" in favor of "End of the Pacific War." At the same time, however, the design of an exhibit at the Smithsonian, centered on the B-29 bomber that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, was curtailed after veterans' groups protested the inclusion of "revisionist" material that would have described the United States as waging a war of vengeance.

It is because of the enormous consequences of the decision to use the bomb in the way it was used that controversy has continued for five decades; it may be that there will never be a consensus about either the facts of the case or the morality of the decision. The main questions still debated include the following:

- Was using the bomb on civilian-inhabited Japanese targets necessary to compel Japan's surrender?
- If the atomic bomb had not been used, would the Allies have launched an invasion of the Japanese homeland? If so, how costly, in terms of Allied and Japanese casualties, would the operation have been?
- By making clear that the Allies would allow Japan to retain its emperor, could President Truman have negotiated a surrender without dropping even the first bomb?
- Was the bomb used primarily as a diplomatic device for dealing with the postwar Soviet Union or primarily as a weapon to end the war?
- Having dropped one bomb on Hiroshima, should the United States have dropped the second on Nagasaki? This issue

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has been largely neglected in the debate, even though, in my judgment, an account of the decision to use both bombs throws needed light on all the other unsettled questions.

For some, the issues of historical fact raised by these questions are central to the making of a moral judgment on the use of the atomic bomb, or, rather the use of both bombs. If it can be shown that using the bomb shortened the war, averting the need for a land invasion and the loss of many thousands of lives on both sides, the moral issue is settled.

For others, to be sure, that is not a sufficient moral criterion. For them any deliberate attack on noncombatants is wrong regardless of consequences, including the possibility that dropping the bomb saved lives, even civilian lives, overall. That is the view of the just-war tradition. In fact, the principle of noncombatant immunity was held by American political and military leaders until it gave way before the passions and military pressures of defeating Germany and Japan.

The case against the bomb is strongest, of course, if it can be made in terms of *both* overall consequences *and* noncombatant immunity—and the adherents of traditional just-war rules would naturally prefer to find these two considerations in harmony. That, along with concerns about the very manner of American wartime decision making, has drawn just-war adherents, no less than others, including pacifists, to scrutinize the details of the historical record.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt made the basic decision to use the bomb in October 1939, when he initiated the Manhattan Project to counter Germany's atomic program and, in FDR's words, "to see that the Nazis don't blow us up." Roosevelt planned to use the atomic bomb. Secretary Stimson recalled, "At no time from 1941-45 did I ever hear it suggested by the president, or any other responsible member of the government, that atomic energy should not be used in war." If the atomic bomb had been ready it would have been dropped on Germany. General Leslie Groves, director of the Manhattan Project, recounted a meeting with Roosevelt in December 1944 in which the president "was concerned that the Battle of the Bulge might upset the timetable for ending the war in Europe and remarked that maybe this would force us to use the bomb against Germany." At another meeting, Groves recalled, "President Roosevelt asked if we were prepared to drop bombs on Germany if it was necessary to do so and we replied that we would be prepared to do so if necessary." Germany surrendered three months before the atomic bomb was ready.

Roosevelt assigned responsibility for planning the use of the atomic bomb to the Top Policy Group, composed of Secretary Stimson, General George C. Marshall, Army chief of staff, Vice-President Henry Wallace, and General Groves. Groves emerged as the leader in selecting targets and preparing to use the bomb. General Marshall told Groves, "I don't like to bring too many people into this matter. Is there any reason why you can't take this over and do it yourself?" Said Groves, "My 'No, sir, I will' concluded the conversation, which constituted the only directive I ever received or needed."

The decision to drop two atomic bombs on Japan was formulated by Groves late in 1944. According to Groves, "I concluded sometime in December 1944 that two bombs would conclude the war after several discussions with Rear Admiral William Purnell, who was a member of the Military Policy Committee. He had served in the Philippines and the Orient. He had spent a great deal of time in 1940-41 as well as before in studying the Japanese character and their probable reactions in time of war. As a result of our discussions I concluded that two bombs would end the war."

Groves explained, "I gave my conclusions to General Marshall, Secretary of War Stimson, and President Roosevelt and later to President Truman. None of them appeared to question them as being unreasonable." Groves described the unofficial nature of his conclusion to use two bombs: "There was never any definite approval of this conclusion and there was no limitation placed on our plans on the number of bombs to be used."

After Roosevelt's death in April 1945, final responsibility for using the atomic bomb shifted to Truman. For advice, Truman appointed an Interim Committee headed by Secretary Stimson. The Interim Committee recommended to Truman that (1) the bomb should be used against Japan as soon as possible; (2) the bomb should be used on a military installation or war plant near houses and buildings most susceptible to destruction; (3) the bomb should be used without prior warning of the nature of the weapon.

Scientists in Chicago protested strongly against the unrestricted use of the atomic bomb. If the bomb must be used, they suggested "a demonstration of the new weapon might best be made, before the eyes of representatives of all the United Nations, on a desert or a barren island." But opposition to the Chicago scientists came from the five-man Scientific Advisory Panel of the Interim Committee, including Arthur Compton and J. Robert Oppenheimer. They advised Truman, "We can propose no technical demonstration likely to bring an end to the war; we can see no acceptable alternative to direct military use."

Also in May, Groves named a target committee to select sites. According to Groves, "I had set as the governing factor that the targets chosen should be places the bombing of which would most adversely affect the will of Japanese people to continue the war." The committee of scientists and ordnance experts recommended targets that would assure "the greatest psychological effect against Japan" and would make the initial use of the bomb "sufficiently spectacular for the importance of the weapon to be internationally recognized when publicity on it is released." Kokura, Hiroshima, Niigata, and Kyoto were named to the original target list, in part because they had suffered relatively less bombing damage than other Japanese cities, so that the impact of the atomic bomb would be more apparent. Incredibly, Kyoto was highly recommended because, "Kyoto has the advantage of the people being more highly intelligent and hence better able to appreciate the significance of the weapon." But Secretary Stimson vetoed Kyoto because it was an ancient capital and religious shrine. Nagasaki was substituted.

The atomic age began on July 16, 1945, near Alamogordo,

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New Mexico. Minutes after witnessing the bomb test, General Thomas Farrell said to General Groves, "The war is over!" "Yes," replied Groves, "it is over as soon as we drop two bombs on Japan."

In Potsdam, Germany, where he was attending a summit conference with Churchill and Joseph Stalin, Truman, according to Stimson, "was tremendously pepped up" by news of the successful test. After he studied a full report of the New Mexico test, Truman met with his advisers to make final plans for the use of the bomb. Truman explained, "I called a meeting to discuss what should be done with this awful weapon. I asked General Marshall what it would cost in lives to land on the Tokyo plain and other places in Japan. It was his opinion that such an invasion would cost, at a minimum, one quarter of a million casualties and might cost as much as a million on the American side alone with an equal number of the enemy. The other military and naval men present agreed."

General Dwight Eisenhower and Admiral William Leahy, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, opposed using the bomb. Eisenhower believed the A-bomb was unnecessary to defeat Japan and he joined Leahy in rejecting its use on moral grounds. But Truman gained Churchill's unequivocal support. Churchill explained "there was never a moment's discussion as to whether the atomic bomb should be used or not. The final decision now lay in the main with President Truman, who had the weapon, but I never doubted what it would be nor have I doubted that he was right."

Before leaving Washington late in July to command the actual bombing operations from Tinian Island, General Carl Spaatz demanded official orders. Said Spaatz, "If I'm going to kill 100,000 people, I'm not going to do it on verbal orders. I want a piece of paper." General Groves wrote this critical "piece of paper." His order commanded the 509th Composite Group to "(1) deliver its first special bomb as soon as weather will permit visual bombing after about 3 August 1945, on one of the targets: Hiroshima, Kokura, Niigata, and Nagasaki. (2) Additional bombs will be delivered on the above targets *as soon as made ready by the project staff*" [emphasis added]. From Potsdam, Secretary Stimson cabled Groves, "S/W [Secretary of War Stimson] approves Groves directive."

General Groves's role in the decision-making process is crucial. He originated the two-bomb plan, and he wrote the order directing that a second bomb (and succeeding bombs) be used as soon as possible after August 3. After Groves's directive was sent to the bomb team on July 25, only a countermanding order from Marshall, Stimson, or Truman could halt the process.

On July 26, President Truman and the Allies issued the Potsdam Proclamation—the last-chance ultimatum to Japan. The proclamation is revealing in its omissions. The president rejected Stimson's suggestion to include a concession on the emperor. Instead, Truman called for a government "in accordance with the freely expressed will of the Japanese people, a peacefully inclined and responsible government." Truman also ruled out warning Japan of the coming atomic attack. He called upon "the

government of Japan to proclaim now the unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces. The alternative for Japan is prompt and utter destruction." Because Japan did not surrender, the order of July 25 remained active. Truman told Stimson the directive to drop the bomb "would stand unless I notified him that the Japanese reply to our ultimatum was acceptable."

On August 6, Hiroshima was destroyed. More than 100,000 Japanese and two American POW's were killed. The world learned of the atomic bomb from a White House press release written by Groves. The president's announcement was staggering: "Sixteen hours ago an American airplane dropped one bomb on Hiroshima, an important Japanese army base. It is an atomic bomb. It is a harnessing of the basic power of the universe. The force from which the sun draws its power has been loosed against those who brought war to the Far East." In a later radio address, Truman warned, "we shall continue to use it until we completely destroy Japan's power to make war. Only a Japanese surrender will stop us."

Meanwhile, the bomb team hurried to obey the order to "use additional bombs as soon as made ready by the project staff." The second bomb was scheduled for August 20, but the date was moved to August 11 when the necessary fissionable material arrived. According to Groves, "It became apparent that we could probably slice another day from our schedule." A round-the-clock effort readied the second bomb on August 9, less than three days after Hiroshima. Time was the sole controlling factor in determining when the second bomb would be dropped. Groves stressed, "Admiral Purnell and I had often discussed the importance of having the second blow follow the first one quickly so that the Japanese would not have time to recover their balance."

On August 9, Nagasaki was obliterated. More than 35,000 Japanese were killed immediately and approximately 25,000 have since died as a consequence of the bomb. Forty-four percent of Nagasaki was destroyed.

Was the atomic bomb necessary to compel Japan to surrender? Or were the merciless bombardment of the Japanese coast and the strangling blockade of Japan by the Pacific fleet the key factors? Or were the ferocious fire bomb raids on Japan's cities by fleets of B-29s the basic reason for surrender? Did Japan finally capitu-

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late because the Soviet Union declared war against her on August 8?

All these factors were important in *defeating* Japan, but in my opinion a *defeated* Japan was *forced to surrender* by the Hiroshima atomic bomb. Japan finally gave up because the Japanese emperor ordered surrender.

And it was the Hiroshima atomic bomb that spurred Emperor Hirohito to make this bold decision. Before Hiroshima, none of the horrors of war visited upon Japan prompted the emperor to act—not the defeat of the Japanese army on Okinawa in June, the destruction of Japan's cities, the starvation blockade, or the threat of a massive allied invasion of the home islands. After Hiroshima, nothing else—neither the entry of the Soviet Union into the war against Japan on August 8 nor the Nagasaki bomb on August 9—was needed to convince Hirohito to order surrender.

A study of the frantic last days of World War II shows clearly the indispensable role played by the Hiroshima bomb and proves the irrelevance of the Nagasaki bomb. Japan's military situation in August 1945 was desperate. Her cities had been devastated by B-29 attacks. The air massacre of Tokyo on March 9 by 350 B-29s dropping tons of magnesium, phosphorus, and napalm bombs was the single most destructive air attack of the war. Over 100,000 Japanese perished in the fire storm where ground temperatures reached 2,000 degrees. By May, three more mass bombings of Tokyo leveled half of the city.

Japan's supply of weapons was nearly depleted by the summer of 1945, her oil reserves were drained, and the country was isolated by a tight naval blockade of the coast. Food was scarce; starvation was imminent. Japan's once proud navy rested on the Pacific floor, and her army had been beaten back to the home islands in an unbroken series of shattering defeats. More than 3 million Japanese had been killed, 1 million in the last eight months of the war.

But despite all this carnage and ruin, Japan clung to the Homeland Battle Strategy Plan, approved by the cabinet and

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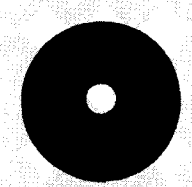

An eye on history

On August 1, 1945, as the bomb called Little Boy (by those who delivered it) and Original Child (by those who received it) was being assembled on the island of Tinian, my father, Master Sergeant James Aloysius Doyle, was in a building at Santa Ana racetrack in Manila reading aerial photographs for the United States Army.

His job was to "interpret" photographs of enemy-held areas taken by Far East Air Force pilots. His annotated photographs were bound into handbooks for the commanders of invading forces. The handbooks described beaches to be attacked, streams and rivers to be crossed, moon and tide tables, and the positions of towns, villages, and enemy forces. They were marked to indicate beach hazards, road barriers, enemy camps, airstrips, supply areas, anti-aircraft and artillery placements, major streets and buildings in towns, and hidden or camouflaged vehicles and troops.

On that day, a Wednesday, my father was working on photographs of the home island of Honshu and of the area around Tokyo; his team was preparing handbooks for the invasion of Japan.

To read photographs, says my father, you hunched over a special stereo viewer—something like thick spectacles on small stilts—and used magnifying flashlights, rulers, and reference books. The reference books were for identifying equipment, aircraft, and vehicles. You also collected information about the area from local citizens or captured Japanese soldiers.

August in Manila is thick, wet, hot. My father, age twenty-four, hunches over his stereo viewer, sweating. Perhaps his thoughts drift. He thinks of his young wife, waiting in a tiny apartment in New York City. He thinks of the estimated casualties (both combatant and noncombatant) of the invasion of Japan: 1 million. He thinks of what the Far East Air Force pilots have been telling the couriers who bring him the photographs under his stereo viewer: There is a new weapon, a bomb, which will bring the war to an end. As he sits there sweating, the bomb is being assembled in an air-conditioned hut.

Four days pass. On Monday morning, August 6, Hiroshima is wiped out. The next day, photographs of the new Hiroshima pass under my father's stereo viewer. "The city was obliterated," says my father, not a hyperbolic man.

"We did not realize then the impact that the bomb would have," says my father now. "In retrospect we would like not to have had to use it. But we judged it necessary then and I judge it necessary still. It ended the war. It saved lives. I have no doubt that the war would have gone on for months. Two invasions of Japan were being planned: Operation Olympic, set for November 1945, and Operation Coronet, set for spring 1946. Olympic was aimed at Kyushu, the southern island; Coronet was aimed at Honshu, 'the heart of Japan,' according to MacArthur.

"I have heard the decision to use the bomb criticized on moral grounds—that is, that this weapon of war was immoral and should not have been used. But all weapons of war are immoral. Is killing one person with a bullet moral? Is killing a few with a grenade? Is killing a hundred with artillery? Is killing a hundred thousand with firebombs, like Dresden, like Tokyo? I doubt it.

"What we have learned about the atom bomb and its successors since 1945 has caused us, and other nations, to avoid using it again. But we have not stopped using the other weapons of war."

BRIAN DOYLE

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sanctioned by the emperor in February 1945, to fight "a decisive battle in the homeland even at the cost of self-destruction of the entire Japanese race." In June, Japan's military leaders secured cabinet and imperial approval for "The Fundamental Policy to Be Followed Henceforth in the Conduct of the War" calling for "100 million people to arise from the vantage ground of their sacred land to strike the invaders dead."

Japan's civilian leaders favored surrender, but even after the fall of Okinawa and the demolition of Japan's cities by B-29 raids, they could not convince the powerful military chiefs. Keeper of the Privy Seal Koichi Kido knew "only the intervention by the emperor" could overrule the military leaders and end the war.

Because of this deadlock, surrender through normal channels was impossible. Decision-making power in wartime Japan rested exclusively with the fifteen-member cabinet, composed of military and civilian leaders, where unanimous consent was required. The Japanese emperor merely heard and automatically approved unanimous decisions already reached by the cabinet. According to Deputy Foreign Minister Toshikazu Kase, "The emperor was always a dummy who sat through the sessions without ever taking an active part."

But in August 1945, Emperor Hirohito, through his prestige as a high priest and "father of the Japanese people," decided the issue of peace or war. However, before Hirohito could be stimulated to end the war he needed to be shocked. The Hiroshima atomic bomb provided that shock.

On August 7, Tokyo learned that "the whole city of Hiroshima was destroyed instantly by a single bomb." Dr. Yoshio Nishina, Japan's leading atomic scientist, flew to Hiroshima and confirmed the atomic explosion. Kido, the emperor's closest adviser, told Hirohito of the Hiroshima blast and described the powerful impact the atomic bomb had on the emperor. "He was overwhelmed with grief" and told Kido: "*Under these circumstances* we must bow to the inevitable. No matter what happens to my safety, we must put an end to this war so this tragedy *will not be repeated*" [emphasis added].

Foreign Minister Shigenori Togo conferred with the emperor on August 8 and confirmed Hirohito's determination to end the war. Togo wrote: "On the eighth I had an audience with the emperor, whom I informed of the enemy's announcement of the use of the atomic bomb and I said that it was now all the more imperative that we end the war, while we could seize this opportunity to do so. The emperor approved my view, and warned that since we could no longer continue the struggle, *now that a weapon of this devastating power was used against us*" [emphasis added], Japan must surrender.

Hirohito instructed Togo to "tell [Prime Minister Kantaro] Suzuki it is my wish that the war be ended as soon as possible on the basis of the Potsdam Proclamation." On August 9 military and civilian leaders disagreed sharply over surrender terms. "All agreed on one point, namely the preservation of the Imperial House," recalled Deputy Foreign Minister Kase: "Should the Allies refuse that, we had no choice but to fight to the end."

Because they opposed surrender, Japan's military leaders demanded three additional conditions they knew would be rejected by the United States. War Minister Korechika Anami, Army Chief of Staff Yoshijiro Umezu, and Navy Chief of Staff Soemu Toyoda, the most powerful men in Japan (after the emperor), insisted that Japan disarm its own armed forces and try her own war criminals, and that the occupation of Japan was to be limited to a minimum time and place.

Truman's critics have argued that he could have negotiated an end to the war without using the atomic bombs if he had conditioned surrender by allowing Japan to preserve the imperial institution. But the Japanese military chiefs demanded all four conditions. Anami argued, "In case it is impossible to include all four conditions we should continue the war." General Umezu agreed that "the four conditions are the minimum concessions." Foreign Minister Togo knew the demands of the generals prevented surrender, declaring the United States "would reject the proposals outright and refuse to negotiate further."

Considering the American people's hatred for Japan in August 1945, after four years of brutal war, it is inconceivable that the United States would have tolerated Japan's four surrender terms, especially after Germany had just accepted unconditional surrender. Truman had renewed Roosevelt's policy of unconditional surrender after Germany had surrendered in May, pledging, "Our blows will not cease until the Japanese military and naval force lay down their arms in unconditional surrender." The American people supported the president. A *Fortune* poll in June 1945 found that 84 percent wanted to "fight on until Japan is completely beaten," and only 9 percent would "accept a peace offer."

Americans had been conditioned by Japan's wartime atrocities and our intense wartime propaganda to despise the Japanese. They probably agreed with Truman, who described the Japanese in his journal as "savages, ruthless, merciless, and fanatic," and, in a letter to Senator Richard Russell of Georgia, as "beasts."

While Japan's leaders were debating surrender terms, they learned that Nagasaki had been bombed. Still, Anami, Umezu, and Toyoda would not give way. General Umezu argued that Japanese soldiers *could not surrender*, explaining that they were indoctrinated to believe that "if they lost their weapons they should fight with their feet; if they couldn't fight with these, they should bite, and if they could not, should cut out their tongues and kill themselves." American Marines had many ghastly experiences with the fanatical military code of Japanese soldiers. In the Battle of Iwo Jima in February and March 1945, of 21,000 Japanese defenders only 216 surrendered. On Okinawa, all but 7,000 of Japan's 120,000 troops fought to the death. Six members of the Japanese cabinet favored accepting the Potsdam Proclamation with the single provision protecting the imperial institution, but Anami, Umezu, and Toyoda held out for the three additional conditions.

The night of August 9, by prearranged plan, Prime Minister Suzuki convened an imperial conference, even though the cabinet was unable to report a decision to the emperor on surrender. General Anami made a vehement plea for a last-ditch fight

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on the Japanese mainland, predicting, "the decisive homeland battle could be a tossup. The battle would cause the Allies to suffer greatly. If we cannot halt the enemy, 100 million Japanese would gladly prefer death to the dishonor of surrender and they would thus leave the Japanese people's mark on history."

General Umezu stubbornly supported Anami's appeal for a final battle, arguing, "the enemy's use of the atomic bomb might be checked if proper anti-aircraft measures are taken." Umezu reminded the emperor that "preparations for the decisive battle of the homeland are already completed and we are confident of victory."

After three hours of impassioned but inconclusive debate, Prime Minister Suzuki asked the emperor to resolve the issue of surrender. Hirohito's words startled the military leaders: "I cannot bear to see my innocent people suffer any longer. I swallow my own tears and give sanction to the proposal to accept the Allied proclamation on the basis outlined by the foreign minister."

The emperor's godlike status and his spiritual influence with the people was overwhelming; Emperor Hirohito's will could not be denied. Therefore, the cabinet approved the emperor's decision to surrender. Suzuki informed the United States on August 10 of the cabinet's acceptance of the Potsdam Proclamation "with the understanding that the said declaration does not compromise any demand which prejudices the prerogatives of his majesty as supreme ruler."

In what would have been a costly blunder, Truman considered rejecting Japan's sole condition for surrender. Secretary of State James F. Byrnes opposed Japan's offer because "it appeared to me that they were trying to add a condition to their surrender." Admiral Leahy argued for accepting Japan's sole condition, stating: "Some of those around the president wanted to demand his [Hirohito's] execution. If they had prevailed, we might still be at war with Japan. His subjects would probably have fought on until every loyal Japanese was dead, and at the moment there were more than 5 million Japanese soldiers in the field." In his answer to Japan's surrender proposal, Truman hedged on the status of the emperor, ordering that "from the moment of surrender the authority of the emperor and the Japanese government to rule the state shall be subject to the supreme commander of the Allied powers who will take such steps as he deems proper to effectuate surrender terms."

Even Japan's moderates opposed Truman's provision that the emperor "shall be subject to the supreme commander of the Allied powers." Japan's leaders again disagreed over conditions for surrender. Fanatical officers clamored for a fight to the finish with the United States. Admiral Takijiro Onishi, vice-chief of the Naval General Staff, pleaded with Foreign Minister Togo to "let us formulate a plan for certain victory, obtain the emperor's sanction, and throw ourselves into bringing the plan to realization. If we are prepared to sacrifice 20 million Japanese lives in a special attack effort, victory shall be ours."

After the cabinet was again unable to reach a decision on surrender, a second Imperial Conference was held on August 14. This time the emperor's decision finally ended World War II. Hirohito explained sorrowfully, "I cannot endure the thought of letting my people suffer any longer. A continuation of the war would bring death to tens, perhaps even hundreds of thousands of persons. The whole nation would be reduced to ashes."

Twenty years after the war, Kido, the emperor's close adviser, explained, "the presence of the atomic bomb made it easier for us politicians to negotiate peace. Even then the military would not listen to reason. The only reason the Japanese Army stopped fighting was because the emperor ordered them to do so." Without the emperor's intervention, Japan would not have surrendered, and without the Hiroshima bomb, the emperor would not have intervened.

If the Hiroshima bomb caused the emperor to order Japan to surrender, what role did the Nagasaki bomb play? None. The Nagasaki bomb had no influence on Emperor Hirohito's determination after Hiroshima to end the war, nor did it convince Japan's military leaders, who opposed surrender to the end. The Nagasaki bomb was irrelevant in ending World War II. Obviously, Truman did not know the details of Japan's internal struggle to surrender in August 1945, but based on information available to American leaders at the time the second bomb was dropped, no moral, military, or diplomatic standard justified its use.

Truman explains his reason for dropping the second bomb in his memoirs: "On August 9, the second atom bomb was dropped, this time on Nagasaki. We gave the Japanese three days in which to make up their minds to surrender and the bombing would have been held off another two days had weather permitted."

But Truman *allowed* Japan *no time* to surrender between atomic bombs; the Nagasaki bomb was used *as soon as* it was ready. Truman's order of July 25 commanded the bomb crew to use "additional bombs as soon as they are made available by the project staff." Had the second bomb been ready on August 7, it would have been dropped then, for General Groves admitted he wanted the second bomb to "follow the first one quickly so that the Japanese would not have time to recover their balance."

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Groves's justification for the Nagasaki bomb was threefold. First, Groves stressed, "We did not know then whether Japan would surrender promptly if only one bomb were dropped. I thought not, and I do not recall that anyone expressed any contrary view. There was nothing to indicate that the original thesis of Admiral Purnell was in any way erroneous."

Perhaps elsewhere Groves answered his own argument. Testifying during the Atomic Energy hearings on November 27, 1945, only three months after Nagasaki, he declared, "I have forgotten now whether it was after the Nagasaki bomb or after the Hiroshima bomb that I realized that this war was not going to last much longer. I had always thought this would be the case once we dropped one." If Groves believed the war "was not going to last much longer...once we dropped one," he conceded that the United States should have allowed more time for the Hiroshima blow to influence Japan's leaders. But Groves admitted, "As far as I know, no one ever considered allowing more time."

Groves's second argument for using the Nagasaki bomb was, "one bomb would be necessary to show the Japanese the power of the bomb, and the second would be needed to show them that we had the capacity to make more than one. In other words, that it is not a single laboratory achievement." But if the Nagasaki weapon was used to prove to Japan that the United States had an atomic arsenal, the second bomb could have been dropped on an uninhabited area, not on a densely populated city.

Groves's third reason for bombing Nagasaki was: "It was not at all obvious prior to this time [before the Nagasaki bomb] that the war was over. We had little information as to the damage the first bomb had inflicted in Hiroshima."

Perhaps Groves was unaware before August 9 of the full damage at Hiroshima, but Truman knew the extent of the destruction and had time to stop the Nagasaki attack. On August 6, Truman had been notified while returning by ship from Potsdam, that Hiroshima had been bombed successfully. Said Secretary of State Byrnes, "His report indicated that the results of the bomb were even more successful than the test had led us to expect." On August 8, Truman studied more information about the destruction of Hiroshima, including Air Force photographs that revealed clearly the vast area of devastation.

The Nagasaki story shows that America's leaders, understandably obsessed with ending the war quickly, failed to use the second atomic bomb rationally or tactically. No high-level discussion was held to consider the second bomb. Nobody challenged or reviewed the informal, unofficial, and premature judgment of General Groves, reached in December 1944, to drop two atomic bombs.

Undoubtedly, Truman and Groves were concerned about the terrible destruction caused by the atomic bombs. At a cabinet meeting on August 10, the president ordered atomic bombing stopped because, he said, "the thought of wiping out another 100,000 people was too horrible." Truman said he didn't like the idea "of killing all those kids." However, after the atomic bomb attacks the United States continued "killing all those kids" with conventional bombs. For fourteen hours on August 14 and 15, even as Japan proclaimed surrender, the Army Air Force launched the largest bombing raid of the war, with more than 1,000 planes attacking seven cities.

Regrettably, General Groves and President Truman acted one atomic bomb too late. After Hiroshima, their fingers were frozen on the atomic trigger despite rational arguments that shouted for delay and reconsideration.

The United States has been wrongly condemned for needlessly introducing atomic war. Without the Hiroshima bomb to spur the emperor to demand surrender, an allied land invasion of Japan would have been launched. The invasion plan had been completed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in May 1945, and approved by President Truman on June 18. The plan called for an assault on Kyushu, Japan's southernmost island, on November 1, and a landing on Honshu, the main island, on about March 1, 1946. Had an invasion of Japan occurred, the carnage on both sides would have been catastrophic. Japan was prepared for a *kamikaze* defense of the home islands. In August, Japan had 2.5 million troops on the main islands backed by 9,000 *kamikaze* planes and a 32-million civilian militia sworn to fight for the emperor with spears, muskets, bows and arrows, and even so-called "Sherman carpets," children with dynamite strapped to their bodies and trained to throw themselves under American tanks.

Against Japan's defense, General Marshall said the United States planned to invade with an initial strike force against Kyushu of 770,000. The invasion army, for what General Douglas MacArthur called "the main assault against Honshu," would have swollen to 2.5 million American troops and half-a-million British troops, an army larger than the allied force in Europe after D-Day and concentrated in a much smaller area.

Based on earlier experiences with Japan's fighting tactics, American leaders expected a massacre. General Marshall explained, "We had to assume that a force of 2.5 million Japanese would fight to the death, fight as they had on all those islands we attacked. We figured that in their homeland they would fight even harder."

Historians have criticized Truman for exaggerating, after the war, the potential American casualties (dead, wounded, and missing) of an invasion of Japan to justify his use of the atomic bomb. In a letter in 1948, Truman said he decided to use the atomic bomb "to save 250,000 boys from the United States." In his memoirs in 1955, Truman said "half-a-million American lives" were saved by the bomb." Truman's critics claim he was told by the Joint War Plans Committee on June 15 that only about 40,000 Americans would die in an invasion of the home islands.

Admiral Leahy understood Truman's concern about American casualties in the invasion of Japan. After meeting with the president, Leahy told the Joint Chiefs on June 14, 1945, "It is his intention to make his decisions on the campaign with the purpose of economizing to the minimum extent possible the loss of American lives."

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Truman asked his military advisers for casualty estimates. General Marshall suggested American casualties in the first thirty days on Kyushu "should not exceed the price we paid for Luzon." That battle in the Philippines produced 31,000 American casualties. The Joint War Plans Committee's prediction of 40,000 dead was considered by Truman, but the planners conceded "the costs in casualties in the main operation [on Honshu] are not subject to accurate estimate."

Admiral Leahy suggested using Okinawa as a basis for determining American casualties on the mainland. Leahy estimated that American casualties on Okinawa were about 35 percent of the total U.S. force of 120,000. After considering Leahy's estimate, Truman told the Joint Chiefs he hoped to prevent "an Okinawa from one end of Japan to the other."

Using Admiral Leahy's "Okinawa formula" (but correcting Leahy's numbers to a more correct 29-percent casualty figure), and considering an American force of 2.5 million for the invasion of Japan, American casualties would have been about 725,000 with about 200,000 dead. Figuring the "Okinawa formula" another way, if 120,000 Japanese soldiers killed 13,000 of 170,000 Americans on Okinawa, then 2.5 million Japanese soldiers on Kyushu and Honshu would kill about twenty-one times as many Americans, or 270,000, with more than a million American casualties. The number of American troops killed in an invasion of Japan would certainly have doubled the 50,000 who died in combat in the entire Pacific war.

The potential civilian losses are even more grim. On Okinawa, approximately 140,000 of the island's 450,000 residents (31 percent) were killed as the American and Japanese armies ravaged the island. For the homeland battle, millions of Japanese civilians were trained and determined to "strike the invaders dead." Using the "Okinawa formula," approximately 27.9 million of Japan's 90 million people might have died in the final battle.

Whether 40,000 or 500,000 American troops would have been killed in an invasion of Japan, for moral and political reasons the president could not allow American fighting men to die in battle while he withheld the atomic bomb, a weapon he believed would end the war. Truman explained, "The use of the atomic bomb was a military decision to end the war and save millions of lives. It was just the same as getting a bigger gun than the other fellow had to win the war and that's what it was used for. I never lost any sleep over my decision."

President Truman's critics argue that the bomb was dropped for diplomatic, not military reasons. They quote Truman's remark that "the bomb might well put us in a position to dictate our own terms" to the Soviet Union after the war, and Secretary Byrnes's statement that "our possessing and demonstrating the bomb would make Russia more manageable in Europe."

But military and diplomatic motives for using the bomb are not mutually exclusive. Truman dropped the atomic bomb to force Japan to surrender and also used the bomb as a diplomatic tool for dealing with postwar Russia. To believe that the United States used atomic bombs on heavily populated cities solely, or even primarily, to impress Stalin makes no sense. The United States, to paraphrase Secretary Byrnes, could easily have shown "our possessing and demonstrating the bomb" for Stalin's benefit by exploding one or two on a deserted Pacific atoll after the war.

In my view, which is one based ultimately on the overall loss of life and not on the principle of noncombatant immunity, the United States was justified in using the atomic bomb. The Hiroshima bomb shocked Emperor Hirohito into breaking the political impasse in the Japanese cabinet and ordering surrender. The Hiroshima bomb ended World War II in the Pacific, and thus, prevented a ferocious land battle on mainland Japan. But America's stature today would be higher, and 60,000 lives would have been saved at Nagasaki, had President Truman waited for the Hiroshima bomb to work its effect on Japan's leaders.

When General Eisenhower expressed his strong opposition to dropping the bomb on Japan, telling Secretary Stimson, "It wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing," he was wrong. It was—once, but not twice. □

Joan I. Siegel

Hiroshima 1991

The woman says:
Everyone ran to the river
and jumped in.
There I found my father,
a miracle.
We floated downstream
with all the burning dead.

The man says:
I was playing soldier outside
when a great flash shook the sky
and the house dropped on my sister.
She screamed, "Help me! Help!"
but my five-year-old's arms couldn't
reach, couldn't pull her out.
Then my older sister came from school
holding half her face melted in her hands,
but together we couldn't pull our sister out.
Then the fires came and the wind
and neighbors took us away.

The old man says:
I was a miracle.
I did not burn.

The blind woman says:
In this bed
I sleep and wake
everyday
darkness begins
the wind catches fire.

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SAVING JEWS WAS HER PASSION

SERVING SURVIVORS WAS HER AGONY

MICHAEL PHAYER

Margarete Sommer of Berlin was forty years old when Hitler came to power. Unmarried all her life, Sommer was a professional woman who had taken a doctorate in social work from the University of Berlin in 1927. Sommer worked for the Prussian state welfare office as a university lecturer, but was released in 1934 "under severe political pressure" by the new Nazi regime. Thus, in the prime of life Sommer experienced her first personal setback at the hands of the Nazis, and her career as a single, professional woman seemed doomed. Fortunately, she was able to find her niche as a liberal, woman's advocate—what we would call today a moderate feminist—within the Catholic church. Konrad Preysing, the forward-looking bishop of Berlin, hired Sommer in 1935 to work for the diocese as a specialist in women's affairs.

Even in its moderate Protestant and Catholic forms, the Nazis opposed feminism. They promoted motherhood and pronatalist programs and objected to the kind of professional, economically engaged women Sommer ministered to. During the later years of the thirties, Sommer's efforts on behalf of employed women became untenable and her career as a woman's advocate ended.

Over the course of just five years, Sommer had run afoul the Nazis twice, and both times she found her professional life stymied. But the end was also a beginning. Sommer, as I discovered in the church archives of Berlin, was about to become active in resisting the Nazis.

In 1936, the Nazi welfare administration ended services for the genetically handicapped and, a few years later, decided on a policy of killing them to preserve the purity of the German race. At this point the web of Nazi racism began to entangle Sommer, and from 1938 on she toiled on behalf of German Jews. I believe that psychologically these were the most tranquil years of her professional life. I will try to explain this paradox.

After the national attack on Jews in November 1938, Bernhard Lichtenberg, a priest of Saint Hedwig's Church in Berlin, began daily public prayers for Jews after Mass. Lichtenberg's defiance of nazism and subsequent arrest inspired Sommer and others to form a resistance group whose purpose it was to assist Jews. Originally this meant helping Jews who had converted to Catholicism, since welfare was traditionally administered through religious institutions in Germany. But as the Nazis' anti-Semitic policy became more and more inhumane and systematic, it meant helping all Jews.

Because euthanasia violated church teaching so blatantly, the German bishops could not compromise with the Nazis as they heretofore had become accustomed to doing. And, since Nazi racist welfare affected women so directly, Sommer became involved in preventing the Nazis from killing genetically handicapped Catholics. This meant finding and placing personnel in Berlin's Catholic hospitals and homes who could be relied upon to hide endangered people, adults as well as children, from Nazi doctors—hide them physically or hide the records that disclosed their genetic condition. Sommer was entrusted with this assignment. Sometime in 1939 she crossed the line separating dissent from the Nazis to resistance.

Sommer's reaction to Nazi racism extended beyond genetically ill Catholics. After Lichtenberg died in custody of the Nazis, Bishop Preysing appointed Sommer head of the diocesan Office of Special Relief, whose title gave no hint of its mission. There were about 190,000 Jews in Berlin, of whom about 40,000 had converted to Christianity. Before Sommer became aware of the Holocaust, her work was limited to converts or part-Jewish, part-Catholic families. This meant getting visas for them, finding jobs for women whose non-Jewish husbands had been drafted, giving financial support to indigent elderly Jewish converts or to families, and helping the sick. When, ultimately, it became clear that *transportation* actually meant death for Jews, Sommer hid Jews and organized

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Catholics to support Jews in their hour of greatest desperation.

Sommer aided as many as she could, but the only real hope for the Jews, she knew, was in forcing the Nazis to stop their killing. The Catholic protest against euthanasia suggested that a similar protest might save Jews. At least Sommer and Bishop Preysing thought so. News about atrocities against Jews filtered back to Germany. Sommer knew about the 1941 Kovno massacre in Lithuania within three months of its occurrence. (Between July and October 1941, over 18,000 Jews, including over 5,000 children, were forced to walk from the city of Kovno to pits located about three miles outside the city, where they were shot.) The next year when the German death camps were built in Poland, SS officer Kurt Gerstein visited Berlin revealing the awful details of a murder at Belzec where 700 or 800 Jews had had to await death for nearly two hours while mechanics worked to repair the diesel engine that had broken down while pumping its exhaust into the chamber in which they stood, pressed body-to-body against one another.

After this Sommer and Preysing worked intently to get Pope Pius XII and the German bishops to condemn Nazi atrocities. Preysing pressed Pius repeatedly, writing him thirteen times in fifteen months during the critical years of the Holocaust. Sommer gathered second-hand information about genocide from all over Germany and even more convincing reports from a "leak" within the Ministry of the Interior in Berlin. Fortified with these, she made frequent railroad trips from Berlin to Breslau where she tried to convince the dean of German bishops, Cardinal Adolph Bertram, that Hitler was murdering Europe's Jews. Bertram, who preferred to avoid conflict with Hitler, eventually wearied of Sommer.

In the end, of course, neither the German bishops nor the pope spoke out forcefully and unambiguously against the murder of the Jews. But the possibility existed at the time that this might change; it was thought that Cardinal Bertram would not live much longer (in fact, he died as the war ended). Thus, for six years, including the bitter Holocaust years of 1942–45, Sommer worked for the Berlin church to save Jews and with her bishop to save all the Jews of Europe. She was engaged in resistance, but in her mind she was working for her country, not against it. For her, Hitler and the Nazis were not Germany. She referred to the years of Nazi rule as the "unlawful time."

Few non-Jewish Germans felt the pain and suffering of the Jews as much as Sommer. For this reason the Holocaust years were a time of great purposefulness for her. At war with the "outlaw" Hitler regime, she was at peace with herself. She identified and associated with Germans who opposed the Nazis and played a central role in the effort to persuade the Catholic church to speak out on behalf of Jews.

At the end of World War II, as historian Gordon Craig has written, Germany awoke to a cold, gray dawn. Physically, Germans had to dig themselves out of the rubble. Spiritually, they had to deal with guilt relating to what was immediately recognized as the most gruesome genocide in human history. By all rights Sommer should have been relieved of the latter burden, but she awoke to her own cold, gray dawn.

Survivors of the Holocaust often surprise interviewers who ask what was the most dreadful aspect of their ordeal by answering, "When it was over!" It was at the moment of liberation that the survivor realized that there was nothing to survive for—neither family nor home. Margarete Sommer would have answered in the same way for two reasons: it was her responsibility to file official death notices for converted Jews who did not survive, and it fell to her to help those Jews returning to Berlin to put their lives back together. Thus, while most Germans put the Holocaust behind them as soon as they possibly could, Sommer continued to deal with it directly.

In 1946 Sommer estimated that of the approximately twenty thousand German Jewish survivors, thirteen thousand resided in Berlin. Caring for them stressed Sommer to the utmost. She was all too familiar with the familial tragedies wrought by Nazi racism. This painful first-hand awareness of human love torn apart was amplified by equally tragic cases of human weakness. There was the case of Peter Grünberg, born in 1933, who was abandoned by his "Aryan" mother after she divorced his Jewish father who became a Holocaust victim; and of Rudolf Hertwig whose Jewish father died in a concentration camp and whose Christian mother "pays no attention to him." Sommer knew of hundreds of cases of broken lives or broken families and this weighed down her spirit.

Material want dispirited everyone. There was not enough food to maintain the general population at a subsistence level. Relief agencies were overwhelmed. Which survivors were most deserving? Who should be employed? Given housing? How should monetary relief be divided among survivors? The committee for the victims of fascism had to deal with these questions, and when they did so in a manner that Sommer felt was incorrect, she became angry and irritable.

But more than the material problems, it was the attitude of other caregivers and of noncaring people that stretched Sommer's nerves to the breaking point. Because Hitler had persecuted Jews indiscriminantly, a solidarity had arisen during the Holocaust among Berlin Jews regardless of religious preference. This also extended, as we saw, to Sommer who assisted or hid Jews whether converts or not. When this interconfessional solidarity broke down after the war, bitterness tainted Sommer's work. The number of converts who, like Edith Stein, had perished during the Holocaust numbered in the many thousands. Those who had not perished were just as much in need of support as other survivors of the Holocaust. Foreign relief agencies, not understanding that to Hitler and the Nazis it did not matter whether a Jew had converted to Christianity, wanted their supplies to be distributed only among Mosaic Jews.

Sommer quarreled with Christian as well as Jewish caregivers. Her attitude toward two rescuers later recognized by Israel as "righteous gentiles," Pastor Heinrich Grüber and Gertrud Luckner, offers a glimpse of Sommer's emotional anguish during the postwar years. Both Grüber and Luckner had rescued Jews during the Holocaust and, like Sommer, both of them gave them-

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selves over completely to the task of relief for survivors. Sommer nevertheless referred in 1946 to Grüber as a dictator and disparaged Luckner's efforts in considerable detail to a mutual friend. Since in reality Sommer had deep respect for both Grüber and Luckner, her bitter denunciations must be understood in terms of her postwar emotional distress.

If she thought this way about Grüber and Luckner, it is not difficult to imagine how she thought of most Germans. The general public, she noted, simply did not accept the fact that the survivors "deserved any consideration at all." Sommer found it continually "astonishing" that "no one can understand why anything needs to be done on behalf of these people [survivors]."

How could Germans forget, Sommer wondered, the awful persecution of the Jews? The destruction of their homes, their ghettoization, and their outright murder? Sommer did not expect Germans-at-large to take responsibility for the Holocaust, but she did expect them to take responsibility for its survivors. When they failed to do so, she wrote off her countrymen for being "small of heart."

Catholics, Sommer noticed, suffered from this callousness as much as Protestants. As a result there was no one with whom Sommer could commiserate or even discuss the prevailing lack of empathy in Germany for survivors. Under these circumstances it was impossible for Sommer to speak out. Had she vented her feelings openly, she would have been accused of self-serving adulation and of promoting herself at the expense of her fellow countrymen. She would have been snubbed and shunned. Thus, the postwar years were a bleak time for Sommer.

In 1954 the Special Relief Office of the Berlin diocese, in which Sommer had worked since 1939 and directed since 1941, was closed. Through the office, Sommer had assisted hundreds and hundreds of Jews over more than a dozen years. She had every right to be proud of her record, but she was not. Although her work became more diversified after 1954, Sommer's experiences during the Nazi years tormented her for the rest of her life.

Two further social circumstances aggravated Sommer's mental state. She lived in a national culture that had not been friendly to the women's movement. Second, she lived in a religious culture that deprived women of authority. Finding herself walled in by these factors, Sommer could not bring herself to speak out against her church or country, faulting them for their failure to confront Hitler over the Holocaust. Unable to blame others, Margarete Sommer, who had done more for Jews during the Holocaust than most Germans, blamed herself for not having done more.

Although Israel has not yet recognized Sommer as a Righteous Gentile, the German government eventually honored her with a Cross of Merit for her work for Jews during the Holocaust. Sommer nevertheless withdrew into herself, scrupulously reviewing her rescue work and asking whether she might have saved others. The torment of the Jews became her own. She died in 1965 at the age of seventy-two. In Holocaust history there are no happy endings. □

SCREEN

SUSPENDED ANIMATION

'POCAHONTAS' & 'BATMAN'

Could a cenobite escape them? No. The monastery's computer might break down and a repair person would show up wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with the face of the Caped Crusader. How about a stylite perched upon a pillar in the middle of the desert? No. Tourists would drive by, and from their car radios wafting up to his God-dedicated ears would come the strains of "Colors of the Wind." It's no use trying to ignore *Pocahontas* or *Batman Forever*. Their protagonists advertise fast food on TV and, in turn, our children advertise the movies by brandishing Pocahontas plastic cups and Batman figurines collected from those fast food joints. Cabbies discuss the box office grosses of the monster megahits the way they used to analyze the final innings of baseball games, and politicians will, doubtless, soon enlist the superheroes in the war on drugs. (There *is* still a war on drugs, isn't there?)

You might as well come to terms with the unavoidables. And when you do...

Lo, they turn out to have been avoidable after all. For *Pocahontas* isn't about the seventeenth-century Indian princess, and *Batman Forever* isn't about anything. These heroes have been essentially ignored by their own creators. The unavoidables turn out to be orphans.

Pocahontas is the better picture, for the Disney craftsmen are too professional to ignore altogether the demands of plot, characterization, and visualization. Yet the movie is, at its core, quite dead. To this tale of two cultures discovering each other, the filmmakers have brought no sense of discovery but only a compulsion to confirm current secular pieties and box-office-tested formulas. Their motto seems to have been: Don't tell the kids anything they don't already know.

For what is Disney's *Pocahontas* but Disney's *Little Mermaid* retreaded? The heroine is Ariel coppertoned and endowed with Olympic-class legs instead of a fishtail. And just as the mermaid longed for the handsome mortal, Pocahontas cherished the European dreamboat, John Smith, no grizzled Elizabethan freebooter here but just another Disney idealization of a high school jock. For King Triton we have Chief Powhatan, and there is the usual villain (Jamestown governor) whose defeat by the forces of goodness reconciles the heroine's father to her suitor. And while the human characters encounter each other, their animal sidekicks do the usual critter shtick that is supposed to steal the show.

All this recycling wouldn't matter if the filmmakers had carried over the comic and pictorial inventiveness of the last four Disney animated features as well as the plot strategies. But they haven't.

The great joy of animation lies in its power of instant

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metaphor. If a sports writer refers to a ballplayer making it safe to first "by a hair," animation can show the athlete's moustache actually uncurling to touch the base (as in the Disney short, "The Mighty Casey"). If a live-action director wants to compare gossiping women to cackling geese, he cuts from a shot of gossips to a shot of geese and the effect is pretty plodding. But the animator can actually turn the gossips into geese and back again with lightning speed and the swiftness mitigates the cliché. *Pocahontas* sometimes partakes of this magic, as when the princess sees the sails of John Smith's ship as very strange clouds and the Disney artists show us just why she makes the mistake. And there is a delightful moment (perhaps the best in the movie) when Wiggins, the daffy hairstylist-manservant of the villainous colonial governor, in an excess of designing fury, turns a sizable part of the forest primeval into topiary. But most of *Pocahontas*'s animation is simply a matter of copying reality, putting before us talking heads that might as well be live actors rather than drawings.

The characters are the blandest Disney has given us since *Cinderella*. Powhatan and the other natives have been carefully drafted to avoid racial insult, but their characterizations are hewed from cigar-store wood. The Englishmen are all dolts, and the villainous governor isn't a patch on the sea witch in *Little Mermaid*.

But the worst failure is the title character. Here, the drawing isn't bad, and it was probably a good idea (given the script's fabricated love story) to make the heroine as athletically fetching as Carmen de Lavallade in her prime. But though the filmmakers have been strenuous in their efforts at political correctness, they have been undone by their own provincialism. While the princess communes with nature, she sings about her need for self-realization. In fact, self-realization becomes the keynote of her character, not tribal honor or human love or nature-mysticism. This wrecks the climax, the famous rescue of Smith from execution. What motivated the real Pocahontas remains a mystery. Was she simply kindhearted or was she prompted by her shrewd father, who was wary of warfare with the technologically advanced whites? Since Disney's Pocahontas is clearly in love with Smith, surely she needs no other motivation to save him. Yet, to pump up suspense, our heroine must wander off into the forest and wonder what to do while her lover is being led to the block, and only when the great tree spirit Mother Willow (gag!) reminds her that the needle of Smith's compass resembles the arrow that has haunted the heroine's dreams, does Pocahontas sprint into action. So that's why Pocahontas saves John Smith—to realize her dreams and, by doing that, to realize herself!

Pocahontas, meet Shirley MacLaine.

(To be sure, American Natives *did* set great store by their dreams, but the filmmakers haven't made their heroine's climactic decision a matter of tradition but an inspiration of sheer egotism.)

Alan Menken, tunemaker of the last few Disney films (except *Lion King*) has here put all his undeniable talent into one song, "Colors of the Wind" (nausea-inducing lyrics by Stephen Schwartz). Yes, it will be on the radio for the next four months. Yes, it will win the Academy Award. Yes, Barbra Streisand will cut her own single and win a Grammy. And yes, it is a mighty catchy tune. But the rest of the songs are depressingly derivative and forgettable.

As is the entire movie. Oh yes, most kids will love it. But, as Maurice Sendak has bluntly put it, kids have no taste.

How does one discuss *Batman Forever*? There's no there there. The earlier Batman movies, directed by Tim Burton, were heavy metal nightmares, dominated by their villains, full of ghastly jokes and haunting images. They didn't completely cohere—Tim Burton films never do—but they fascinated.

This entree, produced by Burton but directed by Joel Schumacher, isn't dominated by anything except the kind of technology that blows up everything in sight and you get sick of that before the movie is ten minutes old. The best verbal exchange is the one you've heard in the fast food commercial—"I'll get drivethrough"—and that's in the first scene.

Val Kilmer should have been a compelling superhero since he is a fine, classically trained actor and such are good at swashbuckling stuff (*see*, Daniel Day-Lewis in *Last of the Mohicans* and Liam Neeson in *Rob Roy*), having a sense of bodily line, commanding voices, and the ability to suggest martial prowess. But Kilmer is pallid to the point of invisibility in the Bruce Wayne scenes, and once he suits up as the Bat...well, anybody with height and good posture looks adequately weird and commanding in body armor. Chris O'Donnell, a usually charming juvenile, is repellent as Robin, all adolescent barking with nothing underpinning the noise. And Nicole Kidman—so beautiful and so profoundly unlikable—curdles the love scenes. Sexual warmth is not her bag. (She'll probably be perfect as the icy murderess in the upcoming *To Die For*.)

But it's the villains who disappoint the most, for it is the villains who must provide the themes of Batman stories. Jack Nicholson's Joker personified hatred of beauty and normality, and Michelle Pfeiffer's Catwoman mocked yet glamorized feminist rage. But Jim Carrey's Riddler does nothing interesting with the idea of brain-teasing. Instead, he's a brain burglar with a gadget that taps into minds, and nothing significant is done with that. Carrey is the only performer here who grabs your attention, but he only grabs, he doesn't charm. Remember the obnoxious class clown in eighth grade? (Perhaps it was you.) Jim Carrey is that clown writ large. The co-villain, Two-Face, is meant to be a Jekyll-Hyde, but no matter which side of his face you're looking at, he's just Hyde. Driven to desperation by the stupidity of the script, the usually fine Tommy Lee Jones only snarls and howls.

At the multiplex I went to, one week after *Batman Forever*'s opening, very few people were lining up to see it, but there was a mob going into *Power Rangers*. That's the trouble with dumbing down. No matter how stupid a movie you've made, there's always something dumber at the other end of the lobby.

RICHARD ALLEVA

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Caped crusader

POPE JOHN PAUL II
The Biography
Tad Szulc
Scribner, $25, 542 pp.

Steven Englund

Pity the poor devil ('s advocate, that is) who will be assigned when, inevitably, John Paul II's cause for canonization gets launched—probably within an hour or two of the pontiff's demise. He will surely be a lettered and experienced Jesuit—pitted against a promoter drawn from (where else?) the diocesan priests of the Opus Dei—yet he won't have an easy barge to tote. Will Tad Szulc be of any help to him? Not much. True, nuggets like the following can be polished and mounted for display:

> ...the pope assured [Indians in the Yucatan] that the church had cared for their welfare from the first day the *conquistadores* had set foot in Mexico. But five months later, when Indians rose in revolt against their landlords and the government in Chiapas...the Vatican was busy trying to remove the local bishop, Samuel Ruiz, the friend and champion of the poverty-stricken peasants....
>
> When Aristide was overthrown by the Haitian army, the Holy See became the only state formally to recognize the new military junta. Strange as it may sound, there were no Vatican protests against massive human rights violations, including numerous political killings, during the junta's rule, and not a single public word of support for Aristide's restoration to office.

For the most part, however, Szulc's fine biography will serve to promote, not refute, the cause of Saint John Paul II. With the pluses and minuses averaged out, it will be hard to dispute the author's conclusion: apart from certain "startling incongruities....[W]hen papal history of his reign is written, it is quite conceivable that [John Paul II's achievements in the areas of social justice and human rights] will outweigh his theological conservatism and severity."

Szulc, in short, portrays Karol Wojtyla sympathetically yet evenhandedly, with perceptive intelligence and occasional literary grace. The proliferation of fascinating evidence in Szulc's book runs the gamut from juicy tidbits—for example, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze made a point of informing Vatican emissaries that they had been baptized; Wojtyla wore glasses but John Paul II does not, meaning the pope appears to have given in to the vanity of contact lenses—to major and astounding "finds," such as the goods on the pope's relationship with Gorbachev or on precisely how the Vatican came to recognize Israel. Szulc is the reporter's reporter, almost the insider. He supplies more detail about the conclave that elected Wojtyla pope than even Peter Hebblethwaite managed to unearth in researching his posthumously published *The Next Pope* (HarperCollins).

True, the sorely missed Hebblethwaite came up with a gem that eludes Szulc: the Cracow cardinal, at his election, seriously considered taking the name of Stanislaus I, after his favorite Polish bishop-martyr. Yet it is Szulc, not Hebblethwaite, who explores fully and enlighteningly Wojtyla's love for the medieval bishop. And it is Szulc, not Hebblethwaite, who supplies the datum that the young actor, Wojtyla, when offered the choice of playing either King Boleslaw or Bishop Stanislaus—(roughly, Henry II and Thomas Becket)—in Norwid's great tragedy, chose the killer king, not the martyred prelate. Wojtyla chose Boleslaw, but only to play him broken and penitent not superb and arrogant à la Frederick II, as is customarily done. Now *that's* fascinating.

But what sets Szulc apart from anything that has appeared on John Paul II, and will probably keep this book on the small shelf of "absolute musts" in the large library of works that will appear on this man and his pontificate, is the profusion of detail on John Paul II's delicate, decisive, and discreet role in undermining communism in Poland. The Polish-speaking Szulc has not only interviewed many *dramatis personae* at the top level of Polish and Russian

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communism—from Gierek and Jaruzelski to Gorbachev—but also held lengthy conversations with the pope himself, an impossible man to interview, let alone for six hours. Too, Szulc has read deeply in the files of the Polish secret police, the Communist party papers, etc.

His book is not without problems. Lacking chapter titles and subtitles, it emits a whiff of hastiness. That impression is confirmed by silly errors like saying Pius XII had the longest reign of any pope since Pius IX—he didn't; Leo XIII did—or confusing an archdiocesan synod of priests with the international Synod of Bishops. Then, too, there are annoying solecisms and feeble translations: "Concerns" is a lame rendering of the German word *sorge* (sorrow, pain) in Pius XI's poignant encyclical against Nazism: *Mitt Brennender Sorge*; while "comments" is a no less caponized translation of the Latin *animadversiones*. Szulc can also be, on occasion, irritatingly obtuse about theological issues (for example, the difference between providence and predestination.)

More seriously, he is a bit bedazzled with his high-level sources, so that Szulc listens to them with an insufficiently critical ear. Statesmen like Jaruzelski and Gierek, not to mention the pope, are anything but objective players; their lengthy assertions of praise or blame should be subjected to close cross-readings, which they do not always receive here. There are also surprising lacunae in a book so "compleat." There is nothing, for example, on John Paul's relationship with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, his right hand and a more significant figure perhaps than the secretaries of state, and little is said about the pope's relationship with the current Polish primate, Cardinal Josef Glemp (although it is fascinating to learn of old Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski's highly ambivalent, perhaps even jealous, feelings about Wojtyla).

Yet at the end of the day, the strengths of the book, as the strengths of the man, far outweigh the drawbacks. For the Catholic reader, what is best about Szulc's work is its ability to raise the question of who a pope is or should be. Peter Steinfels was quoted in the *Los Angeles Times* as saying, "[Pope John Paul] is not a leader whose marching orders [Catholics] await but a repository of what they value and hope for." It is a characteristically perceptive statement. Not any cardinal raised to the "white," as it were, could make a good repository, yet in many ways John Paul II does. Szulc's portrait—with its deft limning of the pope's intense and profound spirituality—gives you a sense of how and why he does. Which is to say, the man, as he emerges from the book, leaves you not a little bewitched, bothered, and bewildered—and angry. But is that anything more than you'd expect, *and indeed hope*, for someone calling himself vicar of Christ and servant of the servants of God to do? Szulc's take is not the only possible one; indeed, one feels almost constrained to urge the careful reader to take a dose of astringent with it, in the form of Hebblethwaite's *The Next Pope*. But much as I admire (and miss) Hebblethwaite, I am slightly more convinced by Szulc. □

PLUMBING THE SHALLOWS

RIDING THE RAP
Elmore Leonard
Delacorte, $22.95, 294 pp.

Robert Worth

Elmore Leonard has been writing great crime fiction for years with the same cozy formulas, the same cast of South Florida rednecks and drug-runners and gamblers and cops and abused ex-wives. So it has been a little strange to see his profile rise abruptly in the past year, with highbrow critical praise, a big Hollywood film, even an appearance in the *New Yorker*. One has to wonder sometimes whether all this attention is going to his head, making him too self-conscious. It has happened before: Dashiell Hammett never wrote a good line after Hollywood discovered him. But these fears are groundless. *Riding the Rap* is as good as anything Leonard has ever written.

As much as any contemporary fiction writer, Elmore Leonard has discovered a style of his own. His books consist mostly of dialogue, and even the descriptions sound like someone talking: clipped, fragmentary, familiar. It is the voice of someone looking in the rearview mirror, describing what he sees on a two-way radio. Definite articles drop out, as do adjectives and pronouns; everything occurs in a rolling, improvised present tense. Verbs give way to the participle: "Bobby watching the fortuneteller standing next to Harry in the recliner, the fortuneteller looking this way now, brushing her long hair from her face with the tips of her fingers, looking this way right at Bobby—Bobby sure of it, the woman calm, still looking this way...." This style can be hard to follow at first, because the point of view drifts between characters, like a cloud of exhaled smoke, without ever seeming to settle on anyone in particular.

Leonard's brilliance consists in having matched his style to his subject perfectly. These are not characters who would bloom into life in the hands of a more sophisticated writer. They are complete, because they are shallow. Their lives are rootless, transient, a blur of violence and get-rich schemes and failed relationships. Yet they are comic, because they do not dream of anything better than the next heist. They reinvent themselves all the time, using whatever materials come along. Louis Lewis, for instance, one of the bad guys in *Riding the Rap*, "was originally from the Bahamas...he could sound Bahamian if he wanted to, but preferred being African-American and worked at it. A popular variation, he tried an Islamic name, Ibrahim Abu Aziz, till Chip started calling him Honest Ib and then Boo for Abu and Louis decided that was enough of that shit."

Leonard's characters live through TV and the movies. In *Riding the Rap* an

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aging gambler named Warren "Chip" Ganz has decided to make money by kidnapping people and forcing them to come up with a way to make the payments. Only he wants it to be exactly like the hostage crisis in Lebanon, which he saw on TV. He wants a basement, "full of spiders and roaches crawling around, pipes dripping, his hostages huddled against the wall in chains....he told Louis and Louis said, 'Where we gonna find a basement in Florida?'" Their first hostage is Harry Arno, who spent Leonard's last novel (*Pronto*) being chased by Italian gangsters. This time he is left blindfolded in an upstairs room at Chip's place, while the bad guys sit around downstairs channel-surfing between Harry (on the house video-surveillance system) and "Oprah." The video system monitors the driveway too, so the main action of the novel becomes (for Chip and Louis) a TV show. When U.S. Marshall Raylan Givens arrives at the house looking for Harry, they recognize his "outdoor good-guy look" from the cowboy shows they've seen. And when the inevitable showdown comes, Louis can't get over the correspondence: "We like in the movies, huh?"

Raylan, no TV junkie, models himself on the real thing, the handlebar-mustached sheriffs of the old Western frontier. Like most Leonard heroes, he is fortyish and tough, having struggled up from poverty and a bad marriage. Unlike the bad guys, he retains some connection with his past, though he doesn't like to talk about it. Born in an Appalachian mining town, he still remembers vividly the day when company thugs broke into his mother's house to get to his uncle, a striker. And now, without a warrant but knowing that Harry is held hostage in Chip's house, he remembers how his mother told those company men that you do not walk into a house uninvited: "Her words hadn't stopped them. No, what they did was stick in Raylan's mind—her words, her quiet tone of voice—and stop *him*, more than twenty years later, from breaking into this man's house."

Raylan also struggles to justify his calling to his girlfriend Joyce, who cannot forgive him for having shot two mobsters back in *Pronto*. Raylan is no philosopher, but his stalwart fatalism redeems the black comedy of crime that is all around him. Transporting a violent redneck to prison, he tells him: "What you'll have to do now is ride the rap, as they say. It's all anybody has to do."

This stoic acceptance of a world of violence, alternating with an ironic, TV-borne detachment from it, is the baseline of Leonard's sensibility. There is something profoundly cheering about it, because it seems to bring a frightening world closer without lessening its glamour. In this respect Leonard is kin to *Pulp Fiction* filmmaker Quentin Tarantino, who gets a nice allusive compliment in the first few pages of *Riding the Rap*. Reading Leonard is in fact a little like watching a film, though no filmmaker has yet matched his pacing or reproduced his laconic humor on screen. And the dialogue might wilt in the mouths of actors. It is tempting to say that no one writes as authentically as Leonard, but I have no idea whether people in South Florida talk like that. What really matters is that after reading one of his novels I want to talk the way Elmore Leonard's people do. □

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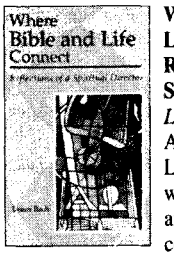

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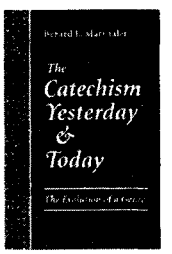

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LIBERALISM'S PHILOSOPHER

JOHN DEWEY AND THE HIGH TIDE OF AMERICAN LIBERALISM
Alan Ryan
W. W. Norton, $30, 448 pp.

Jean Bethke Elshtain

Political philosopher Alan Ryan has written a brisk, compelling, and *almost* persuasive book about the enduring greatness, decency, and relevance of the influential American philosopher, John Dewey. I say "almost" because the reservations Ryan winds up expressing about Dewey's project, in a charmingly muted way, can be pressed rather more robustly and, if one does that, Dewey comes off a bit less well. Let's take up the pro-Dewey case, first, and it is a case this book aims to make.

For Ryan, Dewey was not only "immensely long-lived and immensely prolific," he was the premier *public* philosopher of his time, indeed of America in the twentieth century. Ryan credits Dewey with a powerfully important move from a "distinctive Christian idiom" to a "secular faith in democracy," although Dewey was always happy to deploy a religious idiom when it served his purposes. Much of Dewey's continued use of the "language of traditional Christianity" after he had himself given up traditional Christian belief was strategic: it helped Dewey communicate "with a public that would have turned away from a more aggressively secular or skeptical writer." This strategic use of Christian rhetoric is potentially troubling, but one gets the sense that Dewey was never *merely* strategic and was certainly never cynical.

Ryan hits the nail on the head when he emphasizes, from the beginning to the end of this icily historical and theoretically sophisticated book, that Dewey really thought all sorts of distinctions, divisions, and contrasts need not exist, including those "between science and art, science and ethics, science and religion...." All such distinctions were, for Dewey, "illusory." Thus he set about in all his works softening the contrasts in which various practitioners specialized, whether philosopher, theologian, or cultural critic. Dewey seems really to have believed that if people just thought about the matter clear-headedly enough, many of the differences that divided them from one another could be overcome. An "experimental" rather than a dogmatic approach to life was the ticket to a unified democracy. But it must, for Dewey, be a *meaningful* unity, based on a secular, twentieth-century faith.

Ryan rejects the view of those Dewey critics who see him as an "aggressive rationalist" who wanted to drive out other ways of thinking entirely. Ryan insists that Dewey was a determined rationalist of a certain sort who hoped over time to shrink the area of disputation and to enhance the area of agreement. Although Ryan winds up being dubious about Dewey's attempt to "unify opposites," he very much admires the attempt. I find the attempt itself troubling, an urge to unify or to systematize that is bound to do violence to life's richness and variety and plurality.

For Dewey, life consisted in various "problems" requiring the undertaking of many different sorts of "experiments"—in schooling, social provision, democratic governance generally, even international relations. Ryan thinks Dewey can help us now because we face so many similar anxieties about our schools and our streets and our civic life—similar, that is, to those that plagued the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century with that period's influx of immigrants and exponential growth in cities and in industry. Dewey certainly addressed these concerns and he did this by articulating a democratic faith and eschewing detailed institutional prescriptions. I have no problem with his refusal to offer tight institutional recipes. But I am more troubled than Ryan by a number of things. Let me turn to these, acknowledging as I do so that a great strength of this volume is Ryan's vivid prose and his lucidity. He helps the reader to appreciate her own differences with Dewey.

Here is one vexing issue. Dewey really believed that "everything of value in particular religions" could be turned "to new uses" without *losing* anything of significance in the process. One could, that is, absorb without remainder whatever was of value in Christianity, distill the pure social essence. But this throws theology out the window, more or less. Democracy then becomes a kind of social gospel only, preferable to Marxism because it doesn't preach violence. To Dewey's credit, and in contrast to many on the left in the decades between World Wars I and II, he never became romantic about violent revolution. But he did hope to do away with "sin" and "guilt." But doing away with each means doing away with grace and, as we now know from the perspective of the long haul, constituting human beings as victims

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of syndromes rather than culpable actors.

A second major problem is Dewey's extraordinary naiveté and gullibility about war. He broke with Randolph Bourne and Jane Addams and other friends and fellow Progressives over World War I. Worse, he saw to it that Bourne was removed from the editorial board of *Dial* and that the pages of the *New Republic* were closed to him. This wielding of influence is nastier than Ryan allows. He does say that Dewey wrote some silly and cruel things about pacifism and opened up a rift with Addams. But, more importantly, Dewey first lurched for the war and its potential "social possibilities." Although he never embraced a bloodthirsty Hegelianism about the glories of the war-state, Dewey did work himself up into a fine lather about the domestic good that would come from war. When that good didn't materialize, Dewey joined the ranks of the antidiplomatists and pushed to "outlaw war." And when that didn't happen, he turned isolationist and urged the United States to stay out of World War II altogether.

Ryan's criticism is a bit tentative on this. He calls Dewey's position "elusive." But it was more and far worse. Dewey seems rather stunningly unaware of the terrible ironies of history and the terrible necessities of statecraft. Thus, he wildly overestimated the power of philosophers to determine a country's policies. Dewey wanted to direct America the way he thought Kant—disastrously (on Dewey's view)—was really to blame for the rise of German nationalism. Quite extraordinarily, Dewey "claimed that what lay behind German nationalism was Kant's dualism of fact and value." This is risible on the face of it. There isn't even a glimmer of geopolitical recognition here.

Similarly, although Dewey had given the Soviet Union rather good marks when he toured there in 1928, he never justified Stalinism. Yet, Dewey became part of an ad hoc tribunal that actually went to Mexico to undertake a "Trotsky Trial"—a sort of mock court. The tribunal came to the not-too-decisive conclusion that, although the committee could not "affirm Trotsky's innocence or guilt," it did "affirm that he had not been convicted or even tried." Dewey's involvement in the Trotsky affair is surely a bit bizarre—a peculiar episode that shows, more than anything else, the enthrallment of much of the American Left with the Soviet experiment. Even those who dissented from Stalinism still felt they had a huge stake in the success (or not) of the Russian Revolution. I'm prepared to believe that Dewey was less gulled and more responsible than most. But the whole thing does leave a rather sour taste in one's mouth.

Even more bitter, however, is Dewey's deep and abiding animus against things Catholic. He saw Catholicism as anti-

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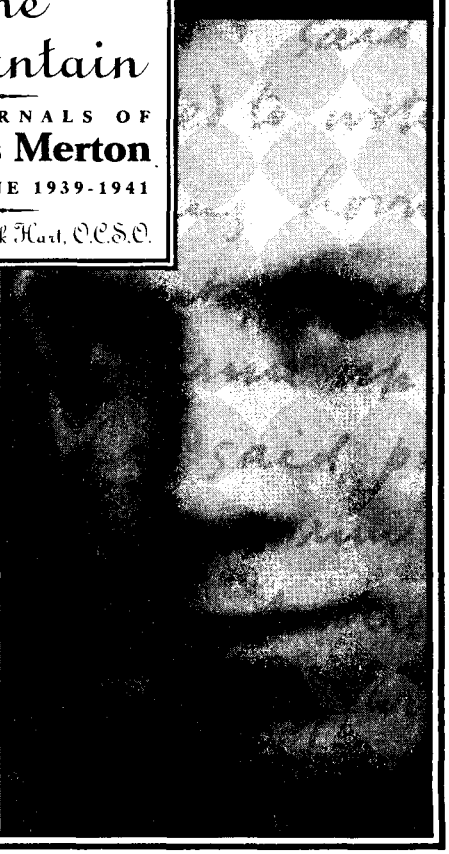

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American, as absolutist and authoritarian, a "threat to science," a "threat to individual liberty," a threat to "social reform." He seems not to have engaged the work of Jacques Maritain; nor does he seem to have acknowledged the role of Monsignor John A. Ryan and the lopsidedly Catholic labor unions in "progressive" American politics. Institutionally and theologically, Catholics just didn't fit. That Dewey pandered to, rather than challenged, deep and often nasty prejudices is a pity and it surely speaks to a deficiency in his version of liberalism. It's a pity, in part, because he would have found savvy and sympathetic arguments if he had ever bothered to read the social encyclicals. Of course, he would have hated the attacks on modernity. But the notions of mediating institutions might have struck a chord.

Ryan ends by offering his sense that the world is filled with more tensions and dualities than can reasonably be removed, not just because we don't think hard enough or try hard enough, but because

> ...the need for privacy and the need to belong, the need for dispassionate and instrumental behavior at work, and the need for passionate involvement in play and the enjoyment of culture—are irreducible. We can be rid of them only at a price not worth paying. Both sides of the tension have proper claims on us, and we cannot collapse virtues of different activities and spheres of life into one another.

I agree wholeheartedly and for this lesson Jane Addams, in her essay on "Filial Relations," is a surer and more trustworthy guide than Dewey. In unpacking the strengths, and alerting us to the weaknesses, of Deweyean liberalism, Ryan has done a great service. □

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

dent-student interactions at UOP *Online* than there are in courses at most traditional institutions, and students have higher levels of both achievement and satisfaction. *Online* students are recognized as such only when they affirmatively commit their knowledge and opinions to electronically archived text sent to the instructor and other students. No text, no participation, no learning, no credit.

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JOHN D. MURPHY

The writer is senior vice-president for institutional affairs at the University of Phoenix.

It's real education

Cincinnati, Ohio

To the Editors: In her column concerning the impact of the computer revolution on higher education, Abigail McCarthy implies that real education cannot take place through this format. As one who has participated in this mode for several years, I must challenge that implication. Out of that experience, I would respond to her questions:

- Will this delivery system entirely replace the traditonal mode? Probably not, but it will provide significant alternatives.
- Can a person really do "scholarly research" using a computer? Can a student "really" take a college course through this delivery system? Certainly, twice.
- Most significantly, will solitary students, solitary teachers, and solitary scholars provide for the future civic and economic needs of the nation?

Solitary? Obviously, the writer has never participated in an on-line course. That students, teachers, and scholars are separated by geography and time does not mean that the teacher is eliminated. True, "[w]e need transmission from teacher to student"; that is precisely what happens through on-line education. Potentially, civic and economic participation can be increased through this medium.

The technology itself is not the point; just as it has always been, this kind of learning is dependent on the vision and commitment of faculty and learners. Given that vision and commitment, what is important is that this technology—as deployed, for example, by the Union Institute's Center for Distant Learning—makes the university degree available to all qualified persons with access to a personal computer, so that many who thought themselves as closed out from higher education—whether because of distance, work schedule, or physical disability—now have this opportunity to realize a lifetime hope.

We are at the onset of a tremendous revolution in the transmission and assimilation of information of the kind traditionally associated with college education. Speaking as a professional historian, I believe these changes will be far more sweeping than those brought about by the printing press. Far from "undermining higher education," we are presented with a tremendous opportunity to enhance it. M. DANIEL PRICE

The writer is a professor at the Center for Distant Learning, College of Undergraduate Studies, State of Ohio.

The author replies:

The world is probably divided between those who see the future made brighter by

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computer technology and those who worry about its potential for the dehumanization of communications. The statements by Provost Stanley Chodorov of the University of Pennsylvania, made at a gathering of eighty scholars concerned about the latter aspect, bear repeating here by way of comment on these letters: "The electronic environment may *enhance*, but it cannot *replace* the intellectual society of the university [my italics]. We humans cannot thrive in bottomless, faceless environments." Provost Chodorov points out also that there are functions of the university that cannot be duplicated by technology, such as that of "producer of new ideas." I understand the enthusiasm of Vice-President Murphy and Professor Price, but it seems to me that they should give the concerns of Chodorov and the other scholars due consideration.

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

A source of contagion

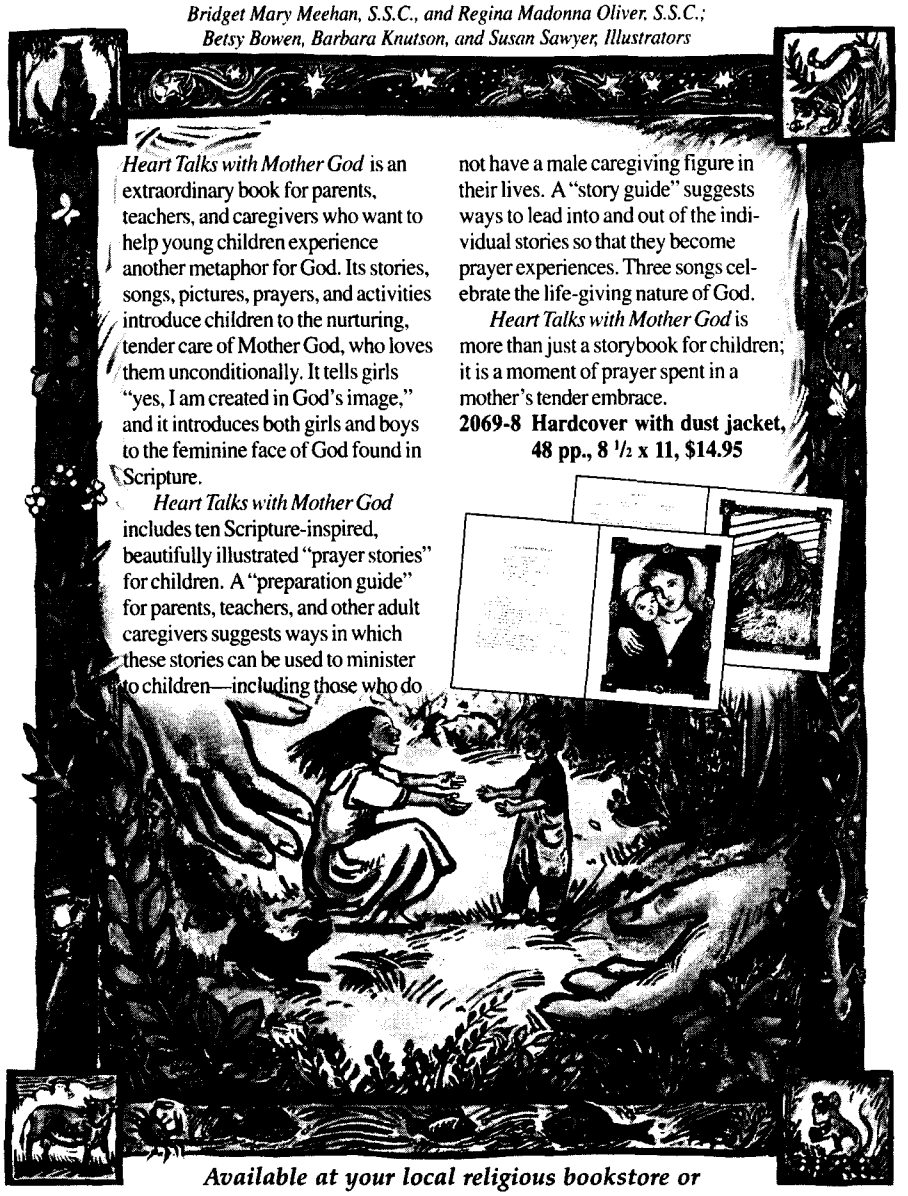
Montebello, N.Y.

To the Editors: No matter how much organizing, fundraising, and vote-getting the Christian Coalition can do ["Catholics and the 'Religious Right,'" May 5], its obscene support for Oliver North is a continuing source of contagion. Though North lost, and the Senate was spared his presence, and though the Coalition no longer mentions his name, it behaves as though its honor was not spoiled by its support of his candidacy. Well, it was, and the Catholic church will be soiled as well if its leaders embrace the Coalition in the way it embraced Oliver North.

WALLINGTON M. SIMPSON, JR.

Heart Talks with Mother God

Bridget Mary Meehan, S.S.C., and Regina Madonna Oliver, S.S.C.; Betsy Bowen, Barbara Knutson, and Susan Sawyer, Illustrators



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Know thine enemy

NANCY G. WESTERFIELD

Fifty years ago, they fought on opposite sides in the Pacific war that scarred them both. One is the professor-husband whom I married in 1950, a newly graduated Ph.D. The other is his Japanese correspondent for the past eight years, at first on matters military, but now on their families, wives, cats, politics, religion, illnesses. Their match was made in Washington, D.C., in 1986, by the U.S. Army Center of Military History.

Makoto Ikeda, like my husband Hargis, is retired, a journalist in his seventies. Because Hargis is older, Makoto never addresses him by his first name; it is always "Dr. Westerfield," and I am "Mrs. Nancy." "Ikeda," he says, is a common Japanese surname; "Makoto" means "sincerity." I know what the name Hargis means. It was the last name of a proud, feuding clan in mountain Kentucky. War is bred in the family blood.

A single bloody engagement—only another minor passage at arms in the vastness of war—unites them. They came together by circuitous routes to Zamboanga, in the Southern Philippines, in March 1945. Bored with computing payrolls in army finance in Australia, Hargis volunteered into infantry, trained with a rifle, and was sent north.

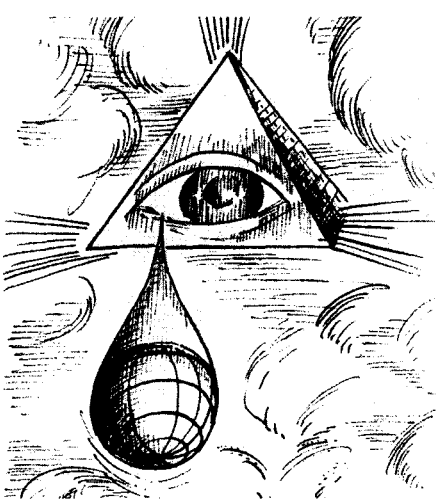
Makoto was trained as an Indonesian language specialist. He had joined Japan's army only after his brother went to his death with his submarine. One ship was sunk under Makoto; he spent a day in the boats. Stranded at Zamboanga, he was pressed into service as a "civilian marine," a common rifleman like Hargis.

The Zamboanga operation, which the Japanese disastrously lost, constitutes major chapters of Hargis's 544-page history of his 41st Division, published in 1993. Much of his grant-funded research was carried on in Washington, at the National Records Center. When Makoto, as an "amateur historian," began his own *A True History of the Sulu Fighting*, he wrote to Washington. The name given to him as the man knowing more about Zamboanga than any other writer, was Hargis.

The two historians found themselves alike in their focus on personalized narrative history. "Truth" for Hargis lay in digging past official records to minutest day-reports and thirty years' massive correspondence with individual contributors. Makoto agreed. "In the defeated Japan, there were many obstacles to write 'true' in the battlefield for the sake of consideration for the war deads, the bereaved, and the survivors. We could write easily a brave comrade's heroic death but we could not write a major's death of hunger because he was deserted by all his men."

The two shared their mourning. For Hargis: the buddy who waved him back on a coral cliffside, and took the bullet aimed for the first man. For Makoto: the buddy he had to leave behind on the retreat into Zamboanga's hills, where the men ate lizards, reptiles, anything they could lay hands on.

Soon the two historians were sharing their lives. Snapshots introduced Makoto's beloved wife, Yoko. Theirs was no arranged marriage: "I fell down in love," Makoto wrote. More pictures: daughter Yuriko, the chubby dark-eyed granddaughter, the treasured mother-in-law in an Episcopal nursing home. Hargis arranged the return of a battle flag taken as prize from a dead soldier. Pictures come back of the flag's ceremonial reception by Makoto's unit in reunion, and its ceremonial restoration to the soldier's family. Makoto introduces fellow-historian Akiyoshi Fujioka, who refused to be an officer, turning in a blank paper at his examination. In battle, he surrendered and accepted amnesty, though his commander had threatened to "kill down" any who slipped away to do so.



Makoto confesses to combining "certain Christian beliefs" with his faithful Buddhism. Writing to Hargis in March 1995, Makoto describes the fiftieth anniversary memorial service in Japan "for the war deads of the Navy in Zamboanga. One of the twenty-seven survivors from the Philippine battlefields contributed their money and built the statue of Kannon [one of the saints of the teachings of Buddha] for the war deads who was calculated roughly 500,000 in total in the Philippines."

Makoto's own history is almost completed now. He doubts its publication "because the general interest of WWII was over already." In any event, he assures Hargis, "If my book will not be published, you will become to be one of few owners of my manuscript of *A True History of the Sulu Fighting*....I owe my work to my many friends, above all to you. If I cannot refer to your 'Division History,' I wouldn't be unable to write my true history." Hargis and Makoto have helped each other reach toward closure of a terrible scar. □

Nancy G. Westerfield is a poet who lives in Kearney, Nebraska. Her work has appeared often in Commonweal.

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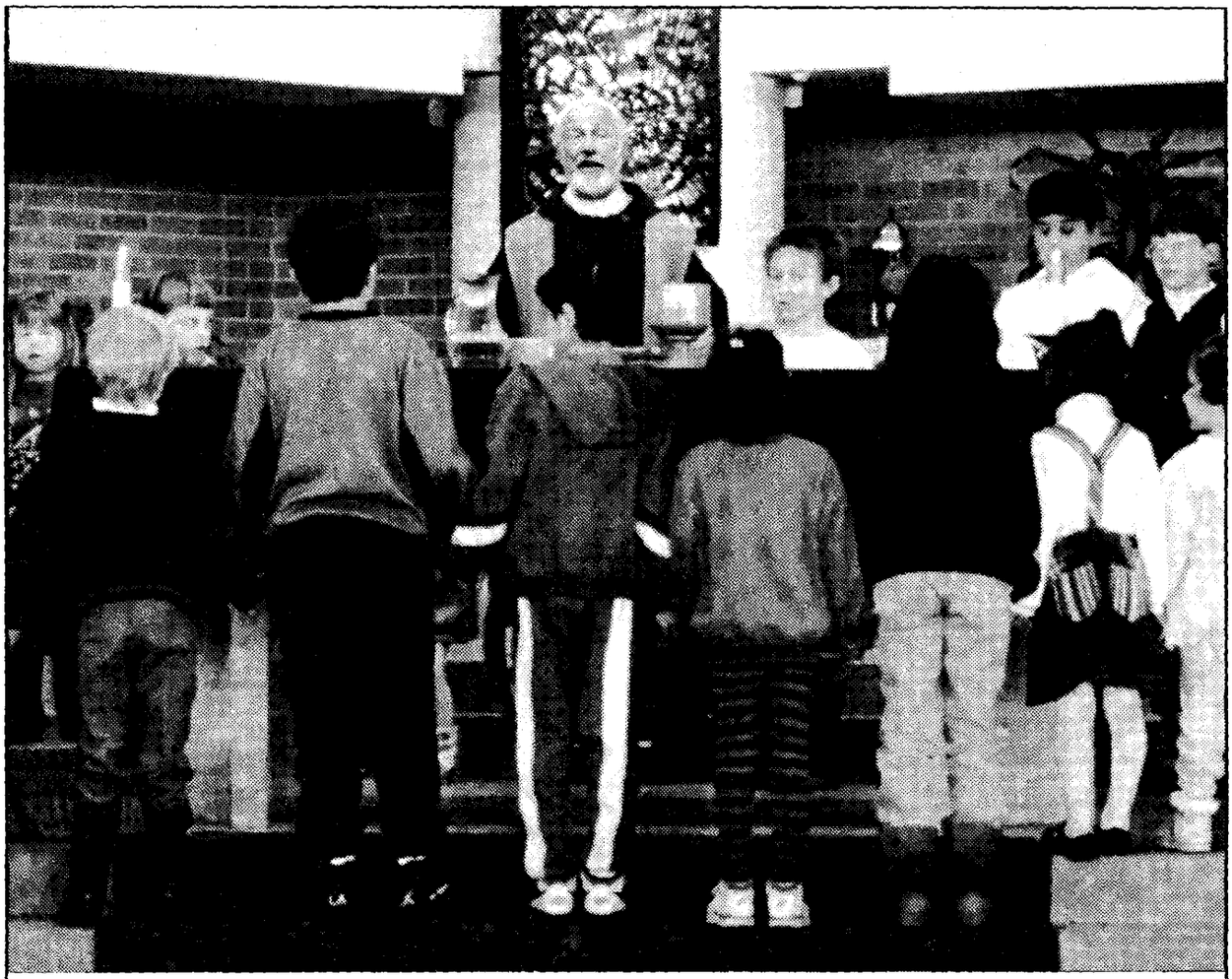

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